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The child's life of our Lord

Sarah Geraldina Stock, Jesus Christ



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The Child's Life of our Lord



THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

WHEN the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

WHEN he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.

BUT when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream to say, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

SAYING, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

AND he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

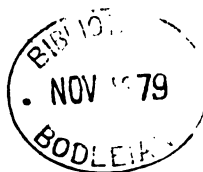
ST MATT. ii. 13, 14, 19, 20, 21.

THE CHILD'S LIFE OF OUR LORD

BY
SARAH GERALDINA STOCK

AUTHOR OF
"LESSONS ON ISRAEL IN EGYPT AND THE WILDERNESS," &c.

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THE CHILD'S LIFE OF OUR LORD.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRTH OF THE HOLY CHILD.

LUKE ii. 1-16.

A LONG way off, across the sea, there is a country which many people like to visit. They come from distant lands to see it. It is a country which I think you would like, for it is full of pleasant hills and valleys; and there are fruit trees, and plenty of wild flowers, and sweet-singing birds. The air also is very pure and clear, and from the heights you can see a long distance, and some of the views are most beautiful. But it is not on account of these things that so many travellers go there. Most of them care for the land for the sake of One who was born there, and lived there, and died there. This country has several names. It was first called *Canaan*, afterwards the *Land of Israel*, because God gave it to a people called

Israel, or the Israelites. But the Israelites were disobedient, and God allowed them to be conquered by another people, the Romans. And then it was called *Palestine*. Now, we generally call it either *Palestine*, or the *Holy Land*.

I am going to tell you the story of the Holy One who once lived in the Holy Land. No doubt you have read many pretty stories about people who were pleasant and good. I used to think when I read such stories that I should have liked to know the people. Did you ever think so? Some stories are about people who never really lived, and whose lives are only made up. Some stories are about people who have died. But the story I have to tell you is about One who is living now, and whom you may now know. And yet it was long ago that He was born, and that He died. And *before that* He had been living. There never was a time when He was not living, for He is the Son of God, and He was with God His Father before the world was made.

There is in Palestine a little town called Bethlehem—a pretty name, which means “house of bread.” It stands on a hill, and from that hill you may look over hills and valleys a long, long way, and right across a valley where the river Jordan flows. And beyond that valley, in the far east, are blue mountains, and over those mountains every morning the sun rises gloriously. Down the sides of the hill on which Bethlehem stands, there are vineyards, where the vines grow, and where you might gather large bunches of beautiful grapes; and further on

there are fig trees, and olive trees, and cornfields, and meadows. Bethlehem is a quiet little place. Although David, the great and good King of Israel, was born there, yet it had never become a great town.

But one day, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, there was a great stir in the streets of Bethlehem. Crowds of people had come into the town, and were hastening, with their asses, and camels, and packages, to the inn. Why was this ?

Palestine was part of the great empire of Rome. The Emperor of Rome ruled then over parts of Europe, and Asia, and Africa. Egypt belonged to him, and Greece, and Italy, and Spain, and France, and many other lands. Our own country, England, belonged to him. We had no Queen then. And the Emperor had given an order that everybody's name should be written down, and the number of people in all these countries counted up. This is called taking a census. A census is taken in England every ten years, only here a man comes round to every house, and takes the names of the people, while in Palestine every one had to go to the place where his family had first lived, to have his name taken down. And so many people had come to Bethlehem that the inn was quickly filled.

I must tell you about this inn. It was not such an inn as you see in England, with rooms one over the other, and a staircase, and a kitchen. An inn in Palestine was generally an open hall, and most of them had recesses

in the wall round, like little rooms with one side taken out. Outside there was generally a sort of verandah, where the horses, and asses, and camels were tied up and fed; and if a poor traveller could find no room inside, he was obliged to take shelter there. There are many caves in the rocky side of the hill on which Bethlehem is built, and very likely the stable of the inn was one of these caves, instead of the usual verandah. You would think it fun to run and peep into them; but I do not think you would like to spend a night in such a dark and dirty place, especially if it were full of horses and donkeys.

Among the people who were the last to reach Bethlehem on the day I mentioned, there were two who had come from a long distance. Joseph, the carpenter, had come from the beautiful town of Nazareth, in the north of the land. With him was his young wife, Mary. They were poor people, but their family had once been great, for they were descended from King David. So they belonged to the royal family, though not one of that family had been king for six hundred years. And as King David was born in Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary had to come to Bethlehem to have their names put down. They were quiet, honest, industrious people, and, better still, they loved and feared God. They must have been very tired after their long journey, and you can imagine how they must have wished for a place to rest in. But, when they got to the inn, there was not one corner left for them. They had no

place to go to but the stable, and I think they were the only travellers who had to take shelter there.

Now I must tell you of some men who were passing the night in a pleasanter place. Out in the fields below, there were some shepherds keeping watch over their sheep. The nights were not damp and chilly, as they often are here; the air was fresh and sweet, and if they felt cold, they could easily make a fire to keep themselves warm. It must have been pleasant to lie there, under the shelter of some rock, and look up to the sky, where the bright stars were shining. I am sure that the shepherds were good men. Perhaps, as they looked upwards, they would repeat the words of a beautiful Psalm which King David had written—

“When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?”—Ps. viii. 3, 4.

God was then about to visit man in a wonderful way, and He was going to tell these shepherds of it.

Suddenly the dark sky above them was lit up with a light brighter than the sun; the stars were no longer to be noticed, for the whole heaven was one blaze of glory. The light came all round the shepherds, and a beautiful angel was there before them. It was all so sudden, so wonderful, so glorious, that they were quite frightened—“sore afraid.” But the sweet voice of the angel said—

“Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings.”

And what were the tidings? Up there, in the little town on the hill, there was a Child just born. He was born for the sake of those shepherds; and not for them only, but for all people. And what was His name? The angels called him three glorious names: *Saviour—Christ*



—*the Lord*. We shall hear of these names by-and-by. These were the angel's words—

“I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

Then the angel told the shepherds how they might find the Child; and as he finished, a wonderful song burst

from a multitude of voices around him. Hundreds of bright shining angels were there, rank beyond rank, reaching far up into the sky, and singing praise to God for joy at the birth of the Child. Never was such sweet music heard on earth. And though the song was so grand and wonderful, yet the shepherds could understand what was sung. These were the words—

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.”

What had these words to do with the Child? His coming was to bring glory to God, and peace to the earth.

No one but the shepherds heard this song. Though so grand and wonderful, I have no doubt it was soft and sweet. The sleepers in their homes in Bethlehem knew nothing of it. It did not wake the tired crowd at the inn. And though Joseph and Mary were not sleeping, they did not hear it. God had given them something better even than that.

But why were the shepherds so highly honoured? I think they must have been humble, unselfish men—men who thought little of themselves. Such people are called *meek*, and we read in the Psalms that God says, “The meek will He teach His way;” and it shows us that God loves the poor and unknown as well as the rich and great.

There was another reason, too, which you will hear by-and-by.

The glory had passed away, and the angels were gone back into heaven. The stars were fading in the sky,

and day was breaking over those far-off blue mountains in the East. But we must go back to Mary and Joseph in the dark, close stable, and see what they are doing. Mary has a new-born baby in her arms, not nicely dressed, as you see many babies, in a long flowing robe, but in "swaddling clothes"—that is, a piece of linen wrapped



tightly round it. She is laying the Child carefully down "in a manger"—that is, a place where the animals feed—perhaps a trough filled with hay. Is this the Child of whom the angels were singing? Yes! this is "the Saviour, Christ, the Lord."

And as the sunbeams begin to make their way into the opening of the stable, there are strangers at the door,

inquiring for the babe just born. You can guess who they are. The shepherds had left their flocks, hastened quickly over the fields and up the hill-side, and are come—the first of all the people in the land—to see the Saviour God has sent.

How Mary and Joseph must have wondered and rejoiced



to hear their story! But it could not surprise them. They knew already who the Child was to be. An angel had come to each of them some months before, and told them that Mary's babe would be *the Son of God*. Think how they must have felt when they took Him in their arms! Think how God must have loved us, when He gave His

own Son to be born as a little child for our sakes! Long ago, God had told a prophet to write these words—

“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.”
—Isaiah ix. 6.

And in another place the Child to be born was called “Emmanuel,” which means, “God with us.” For our Saviour is God and man.





CHAPTER II.

THE CHILD'S NAME.

ST. LUKE i. 31; ii. 11.



HEN a little child is born, people often begin to talk of what his name shall be. One boy is called George, another Henry, another Richard, another Frank. All these names have meanings; Frank means free, or generous. One wants him named after his grandfather or his uncle; but nobody thinks of the meaning—the boy is named after his father, or somebody else. The Jews often chose their children's names by the meaning. I daresay you have heard of the little boy called Samuel, which means “asked of God.” And David called the son who was to be king after him Solomon, “the peaceful one,” and Jedidiah, or “beloved of the Lord.”

We must talk a little about the name of the Babe born in Bethlehem. God Himself chose the name, and the angel who was sent to Mary told her what it was to be. He said, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus.”

Had the angels who sang at His birth mentioned that

name? No; but they said the very thing which the name means, "Saviour," or "He shall save."

I knew a little girl, about ten years old, who one day tumbled into the water. It was deep and wide, and she would soon have been drowned, but a friend of her father was standing by, and saw her fall. He was a strong man, and able to swim, so he jumped into the water after her, and brought her out. How glad and thankful she was to be saved!

Jesus came to save—not one, or two, but all men. He is the Saviour of the world. But why did the world want a Saviour?

Did you ever try to go a whole week without doing, or saying, or thinking anything wrong? Try it, and you will find how hard it is. Perhaps other people may say you have been good; and that is very pleasant. But what has God seen in you? Many selfish thoughts, proud thoughts, perhaps discontented thoughts; a heart that has often forgotten Him—that has not thanked Him for all the good things He gives us every day. Why is this? Because of sin. Our hearts are sinful, and if we were left to ourselves we should grow worse and worse, and could never go and live with God in heaven. But he loves us so much that He gave His Son to be our Saviour. Sin would make us unhappy for ever, but Jesus came to save us from it. So the angel said—

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

For many, many years, people had been looking for the Saviour's coming. Adam and Eve heard about it in the garden of Eden. Directly they had sinned, and brought themselves into misery, God gave them the blessed hope of a Saviour. By-and-by, when men were growing worse and worse, and forgetting their God, He chose one nation to be separate from the rest, and taught them more about the coming Saviour. These were the Israelites, or Jews, to whom God gave the beautiful country which we now call Palestine. King David, and many prophets who were taught of God, wrote about Him. One said He should be born in Bethlehem (Micah v. 2); others spoke of His having to suffer; and many wrote about His glorious kingdom.

When the Jews talked to one another about the One they were looking for, they used to call him "Messiah" (Daniel ix. 25-26). I must tell you why.

You have heard of the olive-trees round Bethlehem. There were many more in all parts of the country, and people valued them very much, not only because the fruit was good to eat, but because of the oil they could press out of it. They were very fond of pouring the oil over their bodies, and this they called anointing. If they were hot and weary, it refreshed them. If they had work to do, it made them feel more ready to set about it. They used it in sickness, and for wounds and bruises. And even if there was nothing particular the matter, they felt all the brighter and pleasanter for it. When a king was

crowned, the oil was poured on his head. So, as God had promised that the Saviour who was coming should be a great king, the Jews used to say, "Messiah is coming," because "Messiah" means "the anointed One."

But did the angels mention this name? Yes; they spoke of "a Saviour which is Christ." Christ is a word in the Greek language, and Messiah a word in the Hebrew language, which the Jews spoke; but they both mean "the anointed One."

I told you that as years passed on the Jews had disobeyed God, and He had allowed them to be conquered by the Romans. And then, instead of being sorry for what they had done, and longing for the coming of the One who could save them from sin, many of them forgot what He was really coming for. They longed very much to be free from the Romans, and to have a king of their own again. And so they liked to read what the prophets had written about His kingdom, and yet even that they did not rightly understand. They hoped for a brave and strong King, who should make them a great people, so that other nations should fear them and honour them. But there were a few who knew better, who felt that they needed a Saviour from sin, and looked for Him in the right way. Have we not already heard of some of these? Yes! we may be quite sure that not only Mary and Joseph, but the shepherds also, were looking for Him in this way. And so they were the first to whom God sent the joyful tidings that "the Saviour, Christ, was born."

There were some too, in other countries, who were looking for His coming. Very sad things were going on in the world then. People who were rich and great thought they might do just as they liked. They cared nothing for the poor, the sick, and the sorrowful. There were no hospitals, or infirmaries, or refuges then. Instead of having servants to wait on them, the rich people had slaves, men, women, and even children, who had been made prisoners in war, and these were often very harshly treated. The Romans used to punish slaves who were disobedient in a very cruel way. A master might kill his slave if he liked, and it used to be done by driving nails through the hands and feet, and then fastening the body to an upright piece of wood, with a smaller piece crossing it. The upright piece was then fixed in the ground, and the poor creature left hanging on it till he died. Yet there were a few who were sorry for these things, even among the rich and great, and they longed for some one to put an end to all the wickedness that went on every day. Many had heard from the Jews that the prophets had written about a great and good king who should come. So they looked for a king too, only they thought he would come to do good to all the world, and not only to the Jews. And they were right. But they little thought how low He would stoop before He took His kingdom, what He would have to do in order to put away sin, and how slow the world would be to believe that He was the "Saviour, Christ, the Lord."



CHAPTER III.

THE CHILD WELCOMED.

ST. LUKE ii. 17-38. ST. MATT. ii. 1-12.

WHEN a new baby comes, how pleased people are to see it! Friends come to look at it; the parents are so proud to show it; brothers and sisters are so delighted; and everyone smiles upon the darling. Sometimes, however, there are babies who have few to welcome them; the parents are poor and friendless, and no one takes any notice of the new little one whom God has sent into the world. But *He* cares for it.

Were there many to welcome the Holy Child Jesus? I do not suppose the people at the inn took any notice of His birth. They were busy getting their names written down, selling their goods, perhaps, if they were merchants, and preparing to start off again. The shepherds told their wonderful story to everyone who would listen; but we do not know that anyone else came to see the Babe who was born for them.

When He was about six weeks old, Mary and Joseph took Him up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the principal

city of the Jews. It was a very beautiful city, built on several hills. There was a narrow valley between the two principal ones, and there were valleys too on the south side, and on the east side, and higher hills rising up all round. King David wrote of Jerusalem in one of the Psalms—

“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people.”—Ps. cxxv. 2.

The grandest thing in Jerusalem, and the thing which every Jew cared for most, was the Temple. Perhaps you have heard how Solomon, the son of David, built a Temple for the worship of God. That Temple had been thrown down by the enemies of the Jews, but another very splendid one had been built in the same place. It was of marble, and the roof, with its towers and pinnacles, was covered with gold. It was built on a steep hill. On the east side, which was the steepest, far down in the valley, flowed the brook Kedron, and on the other side of the brook rose a hill called the Mount of Olives. There were ten great gates to the Temple, and inside were porches, and rows of grand marble pillars, and wide courts, paved with beautiful stones of many different colours. Further on there were gates which led to some inner courts, where only Jews were allowed to enter. No foreigner might go inside. Then in the midst of all was the inner Temple, or *Holy Place*, and in the front of this stood the great altar, where the priests offered sacrifice to God. On grand festival days the courts of the Temple were crowded

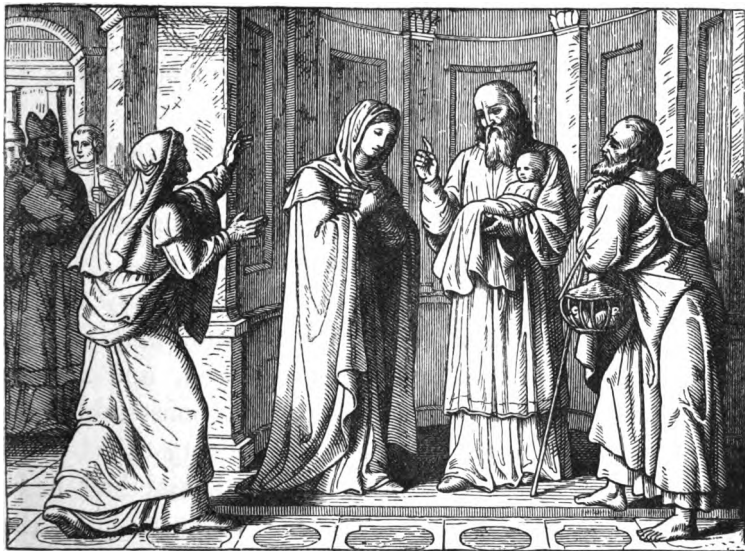
with people, but every day there were some who went there to worship God. There were two people living at this time who loved to be there. One of them was an old man named Simeon. He had longed very much to see the Messiah, or Christ. And God had promised that he should not die till he had seen Him. The aged widow Anna was another who watched for the Messiah's coming, and she spent nearly all her time in the Temple.

It was to the Temple that Mary and Joseph took the Holy Child. It was the custom among the Jews for all the eldest little boys to be taken there when they were six weeks old, and presented before God. The parents took a thank-offering with them, and those who could afford it bought a lamb. The poorer ones bought a pair of doves, and this was Mary's offering, for she was a poor woman. There was always a priest there, ready to receive the children who were brought, and to take the offerings. So the Holy Child Jesus was taken in the priest's arms, and held up before the Altar of God. The priest little thought who the babe was that lay so quiet in his arms. He only saw a poor woman's child before him. He did not know that it was the Son of God, who was come to His Father's house—His own house.

But another man caught sight of the Babe. You can fancy good old Simeon, with his white hair and long beard, coming forward, leaning on his staff. That very day the Holy Spirit had spoken in his heart, and bade

him go up to the Temple. How his face must have shone with joy as he took the Babe reverently in his arms, and praised God because his eyes had seen the Saviour. I must tell you one verse of his song. He says the Babe should be—

“A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.”



The Jews called all other people *Gentiles*, and most of them did not like to think of the Gentiles sharing in the good things God had promised them. But good old Simeon was glad that the Saviour had come for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Presently Anna joined the happy group,

and gave thanks to God too. They must have been the happiest people in Jerusalem.

If you had been living then, would you not have liked to be there to welcome the Saviour? How was it that these two alone saw the glad and wonderful sight? Because they had set their hearts upon it. Their one thought was about the coming Messiah; they watched for Him day by day, and so God gave them what they wished for. He says in His word—

“Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”—Ps. xxxvii. 4.

Then the Babe was taken back to Bethlehem by His mother and Joseph, and, except a few who heard the good news from Anna, nobody in Jerusalem knew that the promised Messiah had been among them.

But a short time after this, a strange company appeared at the gate of the city. There were grand, kingly-looking men, riding on camels splendidly adorned, and followed by a train of servants on camels with their masters' luggage. They came from the far East, from a country called Persia. They had been many months on the road, and had had to cross rivers, mountains, and deserts. What brought them to Jerusalem? Listen to what they said to the crowd who gathered round them—

“Where is He that is born King of the Jews?”

I daresay the people stared with surprise, not only at the strange sight, but at the question. For there was a king reigning in Jerusalem, a king who had been placed

there by the Roman Emperor. King Herod was not a Jew, and the Jews were afraid of him, for he was a wicked, cruel man. They had heard nothing of a new king. But the strangers went on asking the question, passing from street to street, inquiring of all they met. "We have seen," they said, "His star in the East, and are come to worship Him." I must tell you that these men were called *Magi*, or *wise men*. The Magi used to watch the midnight sky, and study the stars. They knew every star in the heavens. And one day they had seen a new star wonderfully bright. They remembered how a prophet, many hundreds of years before, had spoken of a star to come out of the Jews' country. And they knew this meant a *king*. God had sent the star on purpose, to tell them the King was come. And so they took this long and difficult journey on purpose to worship Him. You see there were Gentiles to welcome him as well as Jews.

The news of their coming, and of their strange story, soon spread through the city. Herod the king heard of it, and he sent for the priests and scribes, and asked if they could tell him where the Christ, or Messiah, was to be born. They told him at Bethlehem, for so a prophet had written. Then he called for the Magi, and said—"Go to Bethlehem, and look carefully for the young child, and when you have found Him, come back and tell me, that I may worship Him too." So the strange procession left the city to go to Bethlehem.

Are you surprised that none of the Jews cared to go

with them to see their own King? He had come for them, and they did not care to welcome Him! They were too much occupied with their business and their pleasure, their learning and their money-getting; and no doubt many of them were afraid lest King Herod should be angry. But it was very sad. As the Bible says—

“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”—John i. 11.

The Wise Men must have thought it very strange. But they were quite sure that God had sent the star, and that He would not disappoint them, so they went on bravely, though they could not tell how they should find the right place. But presently a cry of joy rose from the party. There was the bright star again! They knew it directly. It went on before them, and they followed. At last it stopped over a house in Bethlehem. Quickly the men got down off their camels, and hastened in. What did they see? No splendid room, adorned with gold and silver, and beautiful curtains and couches; no servants to wait on the young king; only a little child on his mother's knee, in a plain, quiet room.

Did they say—“This can't be the King”? No, they believed what God had told them. Such believing we call *faith*. They bent low before Him, with their faces to the ground, and worshipped Him. Then they took out the gifts they had brought; bright gold, and sweet-smelling spices, which were worth a great deal of money—just such presents as would be brought only to a king.

Then they went straight back to their own country. We hear nothing more of them, but we may feel sure that they never forgot the King whom they had seen, and that all their lives they thanked God that they had been allowed to go and welcome Him.





CHAPTER IV.

THE HOLY CHILD IN DANGER.

ST. MATT. ii. 13-23.



HAVE something sad to tell you about in this chapter. You have heard of a few people welcoming the Holy Child. Could you have thought that anyone would be unkind to Him? It seems strange that anybody should wish to hurt a little baby, and still stranger that anybody should dare to try and touch the King whom God had sent. Yet there was one who did try.

It was King Herod. As he sat in his splendid palace, he was thinking of those visitors from the East, and the strange news that they had brought. They spoke of a child who was born King of the Jews. But Herod was king, and he had no little son. Who could this new-born child be? The thought troubled him. He was afraid this child might some day take away his throne from him. So he determined to put him to death. But the wise men never came back to tell him. God had told them in a dream not to do so. When he found that they had

gone back to their own country, he was very angry. He could not tell which of the little babies in Bethlehem was the one whom they called the King. So he made up his mind to kill all of them. He sent for some soldiers who were quite ready to do the cruel work, and told them to go and find out every little child in Bethlehem who was



two years old, or younger, and not to leave one of them alive. Thus, he thought, he should be quite sure to get rid of the new-born King.

But, while Herod was planning this cruel deed, God took care of His Anointed One. An angel came to Joseph in a dream, and told him to take the Child quickly out

of Herod's way into a country called Egypt. Joseph got up at once, and called Mary, and in a very short time they had started. They had a long journey before them. It would not have seemed long in these days, when people can travel so quickly by rail. But in those days there were no railroads, nor even coaches; only very rich people had carriages to ride in, and I do not think you would have found their carriages very comfortable. Joseph must have walked the whole way. Mary, very likely, had a donkey to ride on, while she carried the child. They could get provisions for the journey at the villages they passed the first day; and since the wise men had brought those costly gifts, they must have had money enough for all they wanted. Further on, the road led through the wilderness, where there were no villages or farms, or any house to be seen. They had to go on day after day, without coming to any place of shelter, except a rock, or a spreading tree, where they could pass the night. This was nothing for a strong man, but I daresay Mary often felt weary; and you can fancy how carefully she would wrap up the child, and try to screen Him from the hot sun by day, and the cold by night.

At last they got to Egypt. This was a very different country from their own. There were no hills and valleys, and little brooks running between. There were wide cornfields and rich gardens, watered by streams from the great river Nile. And there were great cities, and splendid buildings, and temples, where, sad to say, the people

worshipped idols. If you were to go to Egypt now, you might see some immense figures of idols which the Egyptians used to worship.

The Bible does not tell us the name of the place where Joseph and Mary stopped ; but many people think it may have been at a city called On, which was not many days'



journey into the country. There was a magnificent temple there, where the Egyptians worshipped the sun. Many of these sun-worshippers may have passed by the place where the Holy Child was living, but how little they imagined that He who made the sun was there !

But, meanwhile, what was going on at Bethlehem? I daresay the cruel soldiers sent there by King Herod had not long to search for the babies. Many would be out in the open air, some nestling in their mothers' arms, and some playing on the grass, among the flowers. No doubt the people stared with surprise at the soldiers, and wondered what had brought them there. Think of their horror when they saw them seize the poor little children! How the mothers must have wept and pleaded! Some, perhaps, tried to escape and hide their darlings; but it was of no use, the soldiers were come to do what the king had told them, and they did it, and soon all the sweet baby voices were hushed in death. Oh, how desolate Bethlehem must have seemed without them!

Why did God allow the little babies to be killed? Why did He not stop the cruel soldiers? God does not stop all the wickedness that people make up their minds to do. We cannot always tell why, but we know that He will stop it some day, and that He will punish it, because He says so in the Bible. But did He not care for the little ones? Think of them going straight up to be with Him, without having first to bear all the troubles of life; never to be sick and ill, and weary, and disappointed, and sorrowful. And think for whose sake they died. What an honour for these children to die for Jesus' sake! for the sake of Him who came to give His life for them, that they might be happy for ever. Perhaps, years afterwards, when the mothers of those babies were growing old, they

may have seen and known the Lord Jesus, and have thanked God that their children were allowed to die for His sake.

King Herod was satisfied. He thought the child of whom he was so much afraid had been killed ; there was nothing more to fear from the new-born King. But he was soon called to give up his throne. He died a very miserable death, deserted by all his friends.

Joseph and Mary were staying quietly in Egypt, when one night an angel came again to Joseph in a dream, and told him to take the Child and his mother back to Palestine, because the enemy who wanted to hurt him was dead. I daresay they were very glad to turn their faces once more towards their own country, after living among strangers and idolaters. They were going to Bethlehem, and most likely they intended to settle in the city of David, the birth-place of the Child. But when they got near the borders of the land, they heard that a son of Herod was reigning in his father's place, and they were afraid to go there. So they followed the road which led round to the north of the country, where they might be out of his way, and came to their old home at Nazareth.

King Herod was not the only enemy that Jesus had. By-and-by you will hear of others who were jealous of Him, hated Him, and tried to kill Him. But they could not hurt Him until He had finished what He came to do in the world. When the time came, He was willing to die. He laid down His life to save us. And the babies

of Bethlehem were not the last who suffered for Jesus' sake. Since then, men and women, and even children who were old enough to choose for themselves, have chosen to die sooner than give up the Saviour who died for them. We call such people *martyrs*.

And you must remember there are enemies of Jesus now in the world. Satan, the great Enemy, still sets people against Him. When we do wrong, and think nothing of it, we are acting like enemies of Jesus. Jesus wants us to be His friends, and if we are His friends, we shall try to please Him.





CHAPTER V.

THE HOLY CHILD GROWING UP.

ST. MATT. ii. 23. ST. LUKE ii. 40-52.



I TOLD you that the land of Palestine was full of hills. If you were to travel right through the middle of the country, from north to south, you would go over the hills nearly all the way, though you would often have to come down into a valley, and then to go up again. But in one part you would come to a wide plain, dividing the country into two parts. The northern part was called Galilee, the southern part Judea. King Herod, of whom you heard in the last chapter, and his son Archelaus, reigned over Judea. Jerusalem and Bethlehem were both in Judea; and it was for fear of Archelaus, who was cruel, like his father, that Joseph would not settle in Bethlehem, but took the road which led northward, along the sea-shore, to Galilee.

Among the hills of Galilee there is a beautiful green valley or hollow, not long and narrow, as many of the valleys are, but round like a cup. The hills shut it in on every side, except where a narrow road leads out into the

plain. It is full of cornfields, fig, olive, and almond trees, and bright flowers. There are brilliant scarlet blossoms, called in the Bible "lilies," and "lilies of the valley"—not at all like our white ones. On the slope of one of the hills lies the little town of Nazareth. Nazareth was a quieter place even than Bethlehem. Bethlehem was well known as the "city of David;" but no great man had ever been born at Nazareth—no rich people lived there—no one cared to go to this "out-of-the-way" place. Yet most travellers who go there now think it a pretty place, with its white roofs shining in the distance among the groves of trees. An old writer said that Nazareth was like a rose just opening among its green leaves. This was the place where Joseph and Mary lived before they went to Bethlehem, and here to their old home they brought the Child Jesus.

Did anyone else live with them in this home? Most likely not. There were some boys growing up in Nazareth who are called in the Bible *brothers* of Jesus. But this was a name often given to those who were only *cousins*. Some think that these boys were the children of Mary's sister, and therefore first cousins to the Holy Child.

This home was a poor one. The houses in Nazareth were very probably like those which travellers find there now—small and dark, with very little furniture. It was a busy home. Joseph worked at his carpentering, and Mary had to keep the house in order—to sweep, and dust, and cook, and wash, and mend. And it must have been a

very happy home. It is love which makes home happy. And all in this home loved God, and loved one another.

It is pleasant to think of this home at Nazareth; but most wonderful to think who was living there. The fields and trees round about—the hills that sheltered them—the bright and busy world beyond—the sun, the moon, the stars—all—were made by Him who was there as a little child, growing up day by day. We should think it a wonderful kindness if Queen Victoria were to leave her palace, and live for a year in a poor cottage, in order to do good to somebody. And the LORD OF ALL loved us so much, as to come and live, for our sakes, year after year, in a little house in a poor town on the earth which He had made.

And yet we must remember that, though He was the great God who made heaven and earth, He was really a little child. He needed a mother's loving care just as much as your baby brothers and sisters. His mother watched how He grew from day to day, just as your mother watches her baby. She listened for the first little words that fell from the infant lips. She noticed with delight how, week by week, the words grew plainer, the little feet grew stronger, the baby mind opened, and understood more and more.

But there was one thing in which the Holy Child was different from all others. You know how sweetly baby smiles, how merrily he laughs, how tender and loving is the clasp of his little arms; but you know also that he

can sometimes look cross—that, as he grows older, he shows that he can be angry, and ill-tempered, and disobedient. The dear babies whom we love so much have sinful hearts, and need a Saviour, just the same as older people; but the dear Saviour, who came as a little child for our sakes, had no sin. There was never a frown on His infant brow;



never a cry of ill-temper came from those lips; never was that little hand lifted to touch anything that was forbidden. And as He grew older, there was nothing in Him that could disappoint the tenderest and most careful parents. More than that, there was nothing which ever

grieved His heavenly Father. He said himself, many years later, "I do always those things that please Him." Do you not wish to be like Him? If you come to Him now, and trust Him, He will take you to live with Him one day, and there, He has said, "we shall be like Him." But He wants you to follow His example now, and He helps the little children who wish to do so.

Does the Bible tell us any of the things He said and did as a child? Not until He was twelve years old. But we can picture to ourselves a little of what His life must have been. We can fancy Him in the carpenter's shop, watching Joseph at his work, running to fetch anything that was wanted, and by-and-by learning to use the tools Himself. Then I am sure that He helped His mother, as many a loving, thoughtful child may do. Besides this, He must have had lessons to do. He did not know everything at once, but had to learn like other children. In those days there were schools in every town in Palestine, and the Jewish children were carefully taught. The Child Jesus may have gone to school with the other boys of the place, unless His parents taught Him at home. And we can think of Him playing with other children, and making those around Him happy, as a kind, unselfish child may often do. Yet there was always this great difference between Him and the rest—no one ever saw Him look cross, or discontented, or jealous; no one ever heard Him speak hastily or unkindly; no one ever knew Him do a selfish or a mean thing. No doubt He loved also to wander

among the green lanes and fields round Nazareth, and pick the flowers, or climb the hills higher up, where He could see far over the country.

Then on the Sabbath day—it was Saturday in those days—He would go with His parents to the synagogue, the place where the people met to pray, and sing, and hear



the Word of God, like our churches. Think how He must have listened when the Bible was read! how joyfully He must have sung the praises of His Father in heaven! and how truly and heartily He must have joined in the prayers!

But I must now go on to the one story the Bible tells us about Him, when He was twelve years old. When a

Jewish boy reached that age, he was treated as more of a man. He was obliged to learn some trade, and he was allowed to go up to Jerusalem, like other men, to keep the three great Feasts, at which the people met together to worship God. The Child Jesus had seen not only Joseph, but His mother also, go up every year to the greatest of these Feasts, the Feast of the Passover, and no doubt He had long looked forward to the time when He might go too.

The Passover was kept in remembrance of God's goodness to the Israelites when they were in the land of Egypt. They were very badly treated by the Egyptians, and the King of Egypt would not let them go away out of his country. So God sent a terrible plague upon Egypt. An angel was sent to kill all the first-born in the land. The Israelites were told to kill a lamb, and sprinkle its blood on the door-post. This was to be done in every house. And when the angel came to kill the eldest boys, he *passed over* the houses that had the blood upon them, and the Israelites were saved. After this the Egyptians let them go.

Crowds of people came up to Jerusalem from all parts of the country to keep this Feast. They travelled in large companies together, partly because it was pleasant, and partly for safety. A man travelling alone was often in danger of being attacked by robbers. The women generally rode on camels or asses, while the men walked by their side. It took several days to reach Jerusalem.

When it was very hot, they would stop to rest under the trees, and at night they would try and find an inn, such as I told you of in the first chapter, where they might sleep. During their journey, they used to sing some of the beautiful Psalms of David. There was one beginning—

“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.”—Ps. cxxii. 1, 2.

You can imagine how joyfully the Child Jesus must have joined in singing these words.

Jerusalem was always very full at this time. Everyone who had a house took in as many people as he could possibly make room for. The rest lodged in tents or huts made of green boughs, put up in the streets; and nobody minded this, for it was a time of general rejoicing. Every family brought a lamb, which was taken up to the temple to be killed, and the blood sprinkled on the altar. Then in the evening they all sat down to the Paschal supper. They ate the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread—that is, bread without any yeast in it—just as their fathers had done hundred of years before in Egypt. The Feast lasted for seven days, and every day there were sacrifices offered in the Temple, and beautiful Psalms were sung in praise to God.

At length, when all was over, the party left to go home to Nazareth. Very pleasant was the journey over the green hills, and very pleasant must have been their talk about all they had seen and done—about the beautiful

city of Jerusalem, the solemn and happy services in which they had joined, and the friends they had met. The Boy Jesus was not with His parents; but they supposed He was somewhere among the company, perhaps among the young people of His own age. When evening came, and it was time to take their meal, and go to rest, they looked about for Him, but He was nowhere to be found. How anxiously they must have asked everybody—"Have you seen Him?" But no one could tell where He was. Oh, how bitterly they must have thought—"Why did we not take better care of Him? How could we go on so quietly without knowing where He was? Perhaps He has lost His way among the hills! perhaps He has fallen in with robbers, or with wild beasts!" They could not rest; they must go back at once and look for Him, hoping He might be safe at Jerusalem with friends. They turned back, but saw nothing of Him on the way; they reached Jerusalem, and went from house to house, but could not find Him. They had to spend another night without Him; and next morning, with heavy hearts and tearful eyes, they began their search again.

At last they went to the Temple, and turned into one of the rooms where the learned men, called doctors, used to sit with the young men whom they taught out of the Scriptures. In a moment the terrible weight was lifted off their hearts. There He sat, bright and happy, listening to what the doctors said, sometimes asking them other things that He wanted to hear, and sometimes answering

when they put questions to their pupils. Everyone there was quite astonished at what He said ; and no doubt the doctors would have liked to keep such a pupil with them.

But His parents, even in the joy of finding Him, thought of the suffering they had gone through. He had never grieved them before, and they could not under-



stand what He had now done. “Why did you treat us so ?” said Mary ; “your father and I have looked for you with bitter sorrow !”

I think that for a moment Jesus felt sorrowful—sorrowful because they did not understand Him. They seemed to have forgotten that God was His Father. He

said—"Why did you look for me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Could they be surprised to find Him in His Father's own House, learning out of His Father's own Word? That was the very place where they should have expected to see Him.

It was right that Joseph and Mary should be reminded who He was, and that they should see that He knew. But He was not going to leave His home yet. He turned away from the Temple, and went back with them to Nazareth, and obeyed them in everything, just as He had done before. Some boys, and even girls, when they get to twelve years old, think they are old enough to do as they like; far too old for anyone to say to them—"You may do this," or "you must not do that." But the Son of God, the Holy Child, the Boy whose wisdom astonished the learned men at Jerusalem, was "subject to His parents."





CHAPTER VI.

THE KING AND HIS MESSENGER.

ST. MATTHEW iii. 1-12. ST. MARK i. 1-8; vi. 3. ST. LUKE i. 5-17, 80;
iii. 1-18.

IF you have ever lived in London, and seen the Queen drive past, you will remember that there are always horsemen, and generally soldiers, who ride before her, to let people know she is coming, and to clear the way. In Eastern countries a king usually had men to run before his chariot, besides all the servants who followed and waited on him.

You know that Jesus, the King who was born in Bethlehem, had no chariot nor servants. He grew up in the carpenter's house in Nazareth. But He was not always to live so quietly. By-and-by He was to come forth openly to do the great work which the Father had given Him to do. And God had provided a *forerunner*, or messenger, to go before Him, prepare the way, and tell the people that the King was coming.

This messenger was called *John*. He was born a few months before the child Jesus. His father and mother

lived either at or near Hebron, a town to the south of Bethlehem. His mother's name was Elisabeth, and she was Mary's cousin; and his father, Zacharias, was a priest.

They were both old people, and had given up the hope of having a child. But one day, when Zacharias was in the Temple at Jerusalem, an angel appeared to him there, and told him he should have a little boy, and that this boy, when he grew up, was to be the messenger who should prepare the way for Messiah, the King.

We do not know whether John ever saw the child Jesus. Perhaps, when Joseph and Mary came back from Egypt, they may have paid a hasty visit to Zacharias and Elisabeth; but, both the children were then quite young. After they were settled at Nazareth, it was not very likely that the cousins would see one another, unless they met at Jerusalem, at the Passover. If John did see Jesus there, how much he must have loved Him!

Hebron, where John was brought up, was an important city. Zacharias, as one of the priests, would be very much respected. And if John had chosen it, he might have been a priest like his father. But he did not care to be a great man, or to live in ease or comfort. God had called him to something far higher, and more honourable. As he grew older—perhaps after his parents were dead—he went and lived all alone in the wilderness. Instead of the fine linen and beautiful robes of a priest, he wore a dress of camel's hair; and the girdle round his waist was not made of many colours, or embroidered with gold and

silver, but simply of rough leather. He lived on the very commonest food—the wild honey that he found among the rocks or dropping from the trees, and small insects about the size of a grasshopper, called locusts. The poor people in those parts often eat locusts now. It must have been very lonely in the wilderness. The great rocks shut out the view of anything beyond, and in the narrow paths between them you might meet with wild beasts; the leopard, the wild boar, the wolf, hyena, &c. In those days, too, there were lions there. But John was not afraid. He knew that God was with him, and that God had work for him to do.

He had much to think about in the wilderness. No doubt he had studied very carefully all that the prophets had written about the coming of Messiah. But much of it was difficult to understand. And, no doubt, during the long, sultry days, and in the evening, when the sun went down, and the stars shone out brightly in the clear sky, he thought over all the wonderful things they had said. And I daresay that amidst the stillness he often lifted up his voice to God in prayer and praise. But he had sad thoughts too. He had seen men living as though God were far off, and took no notice of things. He had seen them doing selfish things, and mean things, and unkind things. He had seen them puffed up with pride, and quite satisfied with themselves. And in the desert he could not forget all this, and no doubt it made him long all the more for the time when Messiah, the King, should appear.

And when was that to be? The child Jesus had gone home to Nazareth with his parents, and was there growing up to be a young man, and working as a carpenter. People think that Joseph died while Jesus was still young; because in the Bible we read that the people there called Jesus "the carpenter." We can imagine what care He took of His mother, and how peacefully and happily they lived together. Did she ever wonder how long this quiet life was to go on? She knew He was the Son of God; and yet He was leading the life of a common workman, cutting and planing and joining, taking orders from the people around, and receiving payment for His work. Do you not think it very wonderful? To the Son of God, who had left His bright home in Heaven, it made little difference whether He lived in a grand palace or in a poor cottage. The wonder was that He should be here in this world at all. And by choosing the life of a carpenter, He showed us that work is a good thing and a noble thing, and that we should respect those who are earning their living honestly, whether they are rich or poor.

Jesus must have been well known to the people of the town. They must have seen Him at work; they must have met Him in the streets; they must have sat with Him in the synagogue, constantly. No doubt He was always at hand where there was any trouble, to help and to comfort. I can fancy how the little children must have loved Him, and every one must have wondered at His goodness. But they did not understand Him. They never guessed that He was anything more than Mary's

son, the carpenter. He must often have felt alone, though there were many round about Him. Every carelessly spoken word, every laugh at anything that was wrong, must have pained Him. Yet He was content to live on there until He was thirty years old.

There was now no king at Jerusalem. The Jews had disliked Herod and his family very much; but they were no better without them. The Emperor of Rome had sent a governor to Judea. His name was Pontius Pilate. He had Roman soldiers under him to keep order, and the Jews must have felt terribly that they were a conquered people, and could not do as they liked.

One day the news came to Jerusalem that there was a great prophet preaching in the wilderness, down by the river Jordan. It was many hundreds of years since there had been a prophet among them. There had been many teachers, but no one who brought a message direct from God. So every one was anxious to see and hear the prophet. Crowds of people hastened out of the city, over the hills, and down the steep roads into the deep valley where the Jordan flows. And not only from Jerusalem, but from the other towns and the villages of Judea, the people came flocking. Even from the sea-shore on the further side of the hills, and from distant Galilee, the people journeyed to hear the wonderful preacher. And who was he? You can guess; it was John. For many years he had lived in the wilderness, and nobody knew much about him. But at last the time had come for

him to begin his work, and God had told him to go forth and preach, and had told him what to say. He had left the lonely paths where no man ever passed, and was now in that part of the wilderness which people went through when they wanted to cross the Jordan into the country beyond.

There, standing under the trees, or by the bank of the river, he told them his message—

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

They could tell what this meant—Messiah, the King, was come. They began to wonder whether John himself were the Messiah. But he told them very plainly—There cometh one mightier than I after me.

But he had more than this to say to them. Very few of these people thought about their need of a *Saviour*. John spoke to them of their sins, and showed them how wrong their lives were, and how necessary it was that they should be changed. He told them to *repent*, that is, to turn round—to change their minds and alter their lives. Many felt that he was right, and confessed the wrong things they had done. These people went down into the river, and had water poured over them, as a sign that they wanted to be washed from their sins, and to lead a new life. This was called baptism, and John, who baptised them, was therefore called John the Baptist.

Could the water itself do them any good? None at all. But it was a good thing for them to show publicly that they were sorry for their past lives. And John told

them that Messiah, who was coming, could baptise them with the Holy Spirit, and really take away their sin. Some of them watched eagerly for His coming. But neither they nor John knew how near He was. His quiet life at Nazareth was over now, and you shall hear in the next chapter how He came into the midst of those who were expecting Him.





CHAPTER VII.

JESUS, THE SON OF GOD.

ST. MATT. iii. 13-17; iv. 1-11. ST. MARK i. 9-13. ST. LUKE iii. 21, 22;
iv. 1-13.

AMONG the crowds of people who came to be baptised by John the Baptist in the river Jordan, there was one who looked different from the rest. There were all kinds of people there—merchants, and soldiers, and shepherds, and labourers—some in fine clothes, and some very plainly dressed. This man's dress was quite plain, like that of many others about Him; but His face was very different. He did not look anxious, or excited, like many who listened to John's preaching. He could wait quietly until John had baptised all the rest, and no one noticed Him particularly when at last His turn came, and He stepped forward. But when John saw Him, he said—Why do you come to me? it is I who need to be baptised by you. For he knew that this man had no sins to confess, and nothing to change in His life.

Who could this be? It was Jesus of Nazareth. You know that all His life had been perfectly pure and holy.

It was no wonder that John felt he could not baptise Him. But Jesus wished it done. He had chosen to become a man among sinful men, that He might save them; and now He chose to do the thing that was right for them to do, although He did not need it Himself.

So He went down into the river, and was baptised. As He came up again out of the water, and was praying to His Father, the Bible tells us that the heavens were opened. We do not know what wonderful glory shone through the parted sky, but we know that the Holy Spirit came down like a dove upon Him. Then a voice spoke from above. It was God's voice, and He said—Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased.

I do not think anyone saw this wonderful sight, or heard those words, besides Jesus Himself, and John. Very likely the crowd had gone away, to rest and refresh themselves. They had no idea who it was that had come forward to be baptised after them. John afterwards told the people what he had seen. He had known much about Jesus before, but now he could say to them—I saw, and can tell you, that this is *the Son of God*.

That quiet life at Nazareth was over now. Jesus was going to begin His public work. He would no more work in the carpenter's shop. But He was going to work harder than He had done before. He would no more have a home of His own, where He could rest after the labours of the day, and where He would get up next morning refreshed with sleep. He was going to meet with much

unkindness, much sorrow, much suffering. He knew this, and He chose it, for our sakes. And though He was the Son of God, He was not yet going to take back the glory that He had laid aside in order to come among us. He called Himself the Son of Man. And the Holy Spirit came upon Him, to lead Him and guide Him, just as His people are led and guided now. Only there was a



difference. Every Christian sometimes hinders that gracious Spirit from leading him the right way. For the Holy Dove does not *force* men; He *leads* them. And in our own sinful hearts there are often hindrances. But in Jesus there were none. There was no selfishness, no sin in Him, therefore He was "filled with the Spirit."

And where did the Holy Spirit lead Him first? Not among the crowds who came every day down to the river; not up to Jerusalem, to the Temple. First of all, He was led into the wilderness, out of the way of John's followers, out of the way of any travellers who might pass, into a place more lonely and desolate than you can imagine—a place where there were many wild beasts, but no human being ever to be seen. It was more desolate than the wilderness where John had lived. There was food where John was, but here there was none; no trees or green of any kind, but a few thorn-bushes; no birds, or bees, or insects; only white bare rocks, and sand.

Jesus was here for forty days. Was He alone? The wild beasts, who mostly either attack a man or try and get out of his way, seem often to have stayed quietly by His side, for we are told that He was "with the wild beasts." They did not want to harm Him. But there was *one* in the wilderness who did. He had come on purpose to try and hurt Jesus. It was not a man; it was the devil—Satan, the enemy, the same who tempted Eve to take the fruit in the Garden of Eden. In that way he had ruined man, and now he would try, if he could, to hinder Jesus from saving men. He would tempt Him, that is, try and persuade Him to do something wrong. How terrible it must have been to the Holy Son of God to be near to Satan, and hear the wicked things he said! But you know Jesus was not alone with the enemy.

His Father was always with Him; as He said once afterwards—"The Father hath not left Me alone."

We do not know anything that the devil said to Jesus till just at the end of the forty days. Jesus had taken no food all that time. His heart and mind had been busy all the while, and God had kept Him, and He had felt no hunger. Perhaps you have heard of Moses, who lived long years before, and of Elijah. Both these men had once been forty days without tasting any food. But when the time was at an end, Jesus was hungry, faint, and weary. Then the devil said—

"If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

It was as much as to say—You are said to be the Son of God; but your Father has forgotten you, and left you to starve. If you really are His Son, use your power, and make food for yourself. But Jesus did not want to have food before His Father gave it Him. He trusted His Father. And He answered that it was written in the Bible (in the Old Testament)—

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

This means, that as long as men are willing to obey their Father in heaven, He is sure to take care of them.

So the devil was disappointed. Still he would not give up. He tried something else. I told you that the Temple at Jerusalem was built on a steep hill, with a deep valley below it. The devil took Jesus to the top of one of

the highest towers on this steep hill. The devil can do many wonderful things unless God hinders him. And God allowed him to do this, and Jesus was willing to be tempted for our sakes. When Jesus looked down from this dizzy height, the devil said to Him—"If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."

What a cunning speech! It was as much as to say—You are quite right to trust your Father; now show your trust by throwing yourself down; your Father will send His angels to take care of you, as He says in the Bible. So you see the devil could repeat Scripture too. But he repeated it wrong. The words in the Bible are—"He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee in all Thy ways"—that is, in the ways He means you to go. Those words the devil left out. If anyone thinks he may go where he likes, or do what he likes, and God will be sure to take care of him, he is doing very wrong; he is trying how far God will let him have his own way, and that is called tempting God. So Jesus answered—

"It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Once more the devil tried what he could do. He took Jesus to the top of a high mountain, and showed Him in a moment "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory

of them;" all that is grand, and rich, and fine in this world. Then he said to Jesus—"All these things will I give thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Was it not horrible? But the devil was allowed to do no more this time. Jesus said—

"Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Do you think it strange that Jesus should allow Himself to be thus tempted? It was all for our sakes. He knew that the devil would tempt us, just as he has been tempting men from the beginning. And no one can say "Jesus does not know what it is to be tempted." He knows it well, so He can feel for us, and help us. It is written in the Bible—"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

And Jesus has shown us how to resist, and to conquer. He did not put forth His power as the Son of God to drive away the tempter. He "suffered, being tempted." He felt all the pain of having the wicked thought put before Him. And then, as the Son of Man, He used what God has given us to use against the devil. It is called "the sword of the Spirit," and it is "the word of God." We must use that word. When the tempter has something to say to us, we must remember what God says. It is true that if we were left to ourselves we should forget. But if we look to Jesus, He will, by His Holy Spirit, put the word in our hearts, and in our lips, and then we shall be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

When the devil was gone, Jesus was alone in the desert. He had walked exactly in the way His Father chose, and now a band of angels came down to Him. How glad they must have been to come! They brought Him all He needed; and no doubt, after He had taken food, and was refreshed, He lay down to rest after all the weariness of those forty days, while the angels kept watch over Him. There is such a beautiful verse in the Psalms—"He giveth His beloved sleep." I think it must have been meant first for Jesus, who was God's beloved Son. But it is meant for us too, if we belong to Him. Like all good things, it is ours for Jesus' sake.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES AND THE FIRST MIRACLE.

ST. JOHN. i. 15-51 ; ii. 1-11.

MONG the people who listened to John the Baptist's preaching, there were some into whose hearts the words went very deep. They were not satisfied to go home again as soon as they had been baptised ; they stayed to learn more. They were with him continually, and were called His disciples, which means followers, or learners.

Three of these were fishermen from Galilee, in the north of the land. Two of them, Andrew and Simon, were brothers. The other one, John, had a brother named James, but he was not with them at this time. These four were friends, and worked together. Andrew, Simon, and John had listened eagerly to all John the Baptist told them about Messiah, and were longing to see Him.

One day John the Baptist seems to have been talking about the lambs which were offered up to God in the Temple. Thousands of lambs were killed at the Passover, and besides these a lamb was offered on the great altar every morning and every evening. More than a thousand years ago, God had

told the Jews to do this. It was not the lambs who deserved to die, but the people, who were sinners just like ourselves. The death of the lamb was to show that God would let another die instead of us, that our sins might be taken away. I suppose John the Baptist had been telling the people about it, for, seeing Jesus coming towards them, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Jesus had come back from the lonely wilderness, and was there among the people who had been hearing about Him.

Did they all rush forward to welcome Him? No. I suppose they could hardly believe that this quiet, plainly-dressed man was really the Messiah they expected. They had not got faith like the Wise Men from the East. But the next day, when Andrew and John were with the Baptist, Jesus passed by again, and again the Baptist pointed Him out, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." Andrew and John had been longing for His coming, and they determined at once to follow Him. Jesus turned round, and seeing them, He said, "What seek ye?" They had learned much from John; but they wanted to learn from Jesus now, and to be His disciples; so they said, "Master, where dwellest thou?" And Jesus said, "Come and see." How happy they must have been! They went home with Him to the place where He slept; perhaps a tent, or a little hut made of boughs from the trees; and they stayed with Him till evening.

We do not know what they talked of during those precious hours. But they felt that they had really found the One whom they were seeking. When they left Him, they were

anxious to bring their brothers to Him. Andrew quickly found his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus, and Jesus gave him the name of Peter, which means a rock or stone. John had to wait till he got home again.

The next day Jesus left the banks of the river Jordan to go back to Galilee. Andrew, Peter, and John, whose homes were in Galilee, went with Him. As they were starting, Jesus saw a man named Philip, who came from the same place as Andrew and Peter, and said to him, "Follow me." Philip at once came, and went with Him. What a happy journey it must have been for those four disciples! They had Jesus all to themselves. They could ask Him about anything that troubled them; and there was nobody to interrupt while they listened to His kind and wonderful words. But they had really nothing more than any child may have now. You may have the Lord Jesus all to yourself. He will hear you, and answer you just as if there were nobody else wanting Him.

Very soon there was a fifth disciple. Philip had a friend whom he loved, called Nathanael, and he hastened to tell him that he had found the Messiah. But when Nathanael heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he could hardly believe it. He thought the Messiah could not have come from such a poor place as Nazareth, a place nobody cared about. Philip did not try to argue with him, but only said, "Come and see." And when Nathanael saw that face, and heard that voice, and found that Jesus knew all about him, and cared for him, he said, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

Jesus did not stop at Nazareth, but went to a place a little way off, called Cana. His mother, Mary, was there, with some friends of hers, who were to be married. When they heard that Jesus was come, they asked Him and His disciples to the wedding. I think they must have been people who feared God, and wished to do right, or they would hardly have wanted Him. They did not know who He was, but they knew He was blameless and holy. Yet, no doubt, they were a bright, merry party.

Amongst the Jews the wedding-feast was always held at the bridegroom's house, and there was a man who undertook to arrange and look after everything, so that the bride and bridegroom had no trouble. This man was called the "ruler of the feast." But a trouble arose. Mary saw that the wine was running short. No doubt, when the things were provided they did not know that Jesus and His disciples would be there. And Mary could not bear to think that there would not be enough for every one whom they had invited. She told Jesus her trouble. Jesus was ready to help. But He had to tell His mother first something that she might have forgotten. He could no longer act as Mary's son; He must act as the Son of God.

Then He turned to the servants, and told them to fill the water-pots with water. These water-pots were large stone jars, and they held a great deal. The Jews were very particular about washing before meals, and there was always plenty of water provided for the guests. The six jars were probably empty now, and the servants did as Jesus bade, and

filled them up to the brim. Then He told them to pour some into a cup and carry it to the ruler of the feast. All the wine that was drunk at table had first to be tasted by the ruler. The servants must have thought it strange that they were told to take the water out of the water-pots to him. But how much more they must have wondered when they saw that it was not



water that came out, but wine. They said nothing, however, but quietly did as Jesus told them. The ruler, too, was astonished when he tasted it; not that he knew where it came from, but because it was so good. For at these feasts the best wine was generally brought out first. So he said to the bridegroom, "Most people bring out the good wine first

but you have kept it to the last." But the bridegroom knew nothing about it, and, I daresay, he too wondered what it could mean.

Who could tell them? Either Mary or the servants, and I think most likely it was the servants who told. Think how astonished everyone must have been. Think how every eye must have turned to Jesus; how they must have thanked Him, and wondered at His love and power.

How happy Mary must have felt! She had never seen Jesus do anything miraculous before. It was His first miracle. And, like all His miracles, it was a miracle of kindness. He had prevented the pleasure of the happy party being spoiled, and He had provided the young married people with wine enough to last them a long while. I must tell you that the wine in Palestine is not at all like the wine and other strong drinks people use in England—not nearly so strong; so there was no danger of its doing them harm.

Is it not pleasant to see that Jesus cares even for our small pleasures? We might have thought He would only mind the great things; but at this marriage-feast he showed that He likes us to be happy. And more than that, He showed that He is willing to be with us in our pleasures. And you may remember that there is no true pleasure without Him.

The disciples had felt sure before this that He was the Messiah. But now they felt even more sure. They had seen not only how kind and ready He was to help, but also that He had power to help. They had seen His glory—

only a little of it, but still enough to make them very happy.

I wonder whether they thought of another thing. I told you what the ruler of the feast said to the bridegroom, "You have kept the good wine till the last." That is just what Jesus does. He gave His disciples many good things, but the best were yet to come. Even now they have not yet got their very best. Jesus will not give that till He has gathered all His people together. If you come to Him now, He can make you very happy; but there will always be something better to look forward to—the best will come last of all.





CHAPTER IX.

JESUS AT JERUSALEM.

ST. JOHN ii. 13-25 ; iii. 1-22 ; iv. 1, 2.



SOON after the miracle at Cana, the time of the Passover Feast drew near. Jesus and His disciples went up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast.

I have told you before about the Temple at Jerusalem. Let us see what was going on there at the time of this Passover. If you had gone in at one of the great gates, you would have seen a strange sight. The beautiful courts, with their coloured pavement, were filled with a noisy crowd. There were droves of sheep and oxen, and men with cages of doves, and the people thronging round them. What was this for? These animals were for sale. The people wanted them for sacrifices to offer up to God. Formerly they had been sold outside, but gradually one man after another had ventured into the courts of the Temple, and nobody had put a stop to it. Besides this, there were tables, and men sitting at them to change money. The Jews had to offer a piece of money for the service of God, and they were obliged to offer Jewish money. Many of them who came from a distance

had Roman or Greek money, and they wanted it changed before they could bring their offering.

But was the Temple the place for all this to be done? How sad that men should have dared to do these things in the House of God, and should fancy they might serve Him in such a manner!

Jesus and His disciples came into the Temple while this was going on. Think what Jesus must have felt at seeing such things in His Father's house! Instantly he gathered up some of the rushes lying about where the cattle were being sold, and fastened them together to make a sort of whip. With this He went boldly forward, threw down the tables where the money-changers sat; scattering all their money; and drove the men and the sheep and the oxen all out of the Temple. But He would not touch the tender doves; so He said to those who sold them, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

But why did they let Him do it? Why did such a number allow themselves to be driven out by one man? They dared not disobey. They knew they were doing wrong, and they saw that they could not resist Jesus. The people who stood by and wondered knew that it was right. And the rulers and priests knew it too, and must have felt ashamed that they had allowed these things to go on so long. But they were not pleased that a poor man from Galilee (as they thought) should do what they ought themselves to have done.

And yet they might have known better. Long ago a prophet, called Malachi, had written these words—"The Lord,

whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple" (Mal. iii. 1). Now He was come. The prophet also spoke of His coming to cleanse and purify. He had just cleansed the Temple. If those rulers and priests had been really looking for Messiah, ought they not to have understood that He was come? But they would not believe it. They did not like to think of it. So they asked Him for a sign to show that He had the right to do what he had just done. And He said, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

"Why," they said, "it has taken forty-six years to build the Temple, and how can you build it in three days?"

Now Jesus did not mean the beautiful building in which they were then standing. He meant something very different. I have told you these words because, by-and-by, you will hear of them again.

Among all the people who came to the Passover, were there none who believed in Jesus? Yes; there were a few who thought He was the Messiah, because of the wonderful things He did. But they did not really give Him their hearts; He could not trust them, for they were not true disciples. How much better to be a true disciple!

But there was one who was very anxious to hear more from Jesus. He was one of the rulers, a teacher of others, and very learned. He did not like to be seen coming to this unknown man from Galilee. So he waited till night came on, and then in the darkness he crept softly along the streets till he came to the house where Jesus was staying. Jesus was ready to see him, for He knew that Nicodemus was

really in earnest, although he was ashamed to be seen by others. But He spoke to him at once in these solemn words—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus could not understand this. He said, "How can a man, when he is grown up, be born a second time as a child?" But Jesus was not speaking of a man's body. He spoke of the heart. We are all born with bad hearts, and nothing bad is fit for the kingdom of God. Jesus said that we all needed new hearts, and that the Holy Spirit could make our hearts new. Then, as Nicodemus was still puzzled, He explained it further. He spoke of the Son of Man coming down from heaven. And He told him that this Son of Man was really the Son of God. Then He spoke of God's wonderful love, how He cared so much for this wicked world, that He sent His own dear Son to save us. I must tell you the words, for they are so beautiful—

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

When anyone really believes this with all his heart, that heart is changed, made new by the Holy Spirit; it becomes a heart that loves God and wishes to please Him.

Nicodemus had never heard such wonderful words as these. As he sat there in the dim lamp-light, he began gradually to see what he had never seen before. I daresay he had been very well content with himself, and thought that he only needed to learn a little more, and it would be all right with

him. Now he saw that he must be changed ; that he must be a new man ; that Jesus must have his whole heart.

The first disciples had given their hearts to Jesus very simply. Nicodemus could not do the same. He remembered that he was one of the rulers. How strange it would look if he became a disciple of this stranger from Galilee. What would people say to a great teacher, like himself, learning from one who had been taught nothing more than other working men ? The other rulers did not believe in Jesus. Nicodemus would have to bear being laughed at, and perhaps disliked and ill-treated, if he declared that he believed in Him. So he was ashamed to confess Jesus. He went home again, knowing what he ought to do, but afraid to do it. How far happier were Andrew, Peter, John, Philip, and Nathanael, than this man !

You have seen how Jesus showed Himself openly at Jerusalem ; how He did the very thing the Jews might have expected Messiah to do. And yet not one man was willing to come out boldly and be His true disciple. After the Passover, He went with His disciples into the country towns and villages. There many believed in Him, and the disciples baptised them in His name. But the great city, the rulers, the priests, the people, would not receive their King. Was it not sad ?

But there is a day coming when every one will know and confess that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of all the earth. If we have given Him our hearts, how happy this will make us ! Only we must do it *now*, and not wait till it is too late. The Bible says, " Now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation."—2 Cor. vi. 2.



CHAPTER X.

THE WELL AT SYCHAR.

ST. JOHN iv. 3-42.



HERE is a famous well in the Holy Land which most travellers take care to go and see. It is called Jacob's Well, because we believe it was dug by Jacob himself, more than three thousand years ago. It is just at the entrance of a narrow valley between two high hills, called Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. This valley is one of the most beautiful places in all the country. There are bright, sparkling brooks running through it, orange trees and mulberry trees and fig trees growing in it, and quantities of birds filling the air with their sweet songs. Perhaps you will wonder why Jacob wanted to dig a well close to a place where there was so much water. Most likely his neighbours would say the brooks belonged to them, and he did not wish to quarrel with them, so he dug the well for his own use. In that part of the world water is far more scarce than it is with us, and so it is very highly valued. That well has been kept carefully ever since, and there is now a wall around it.

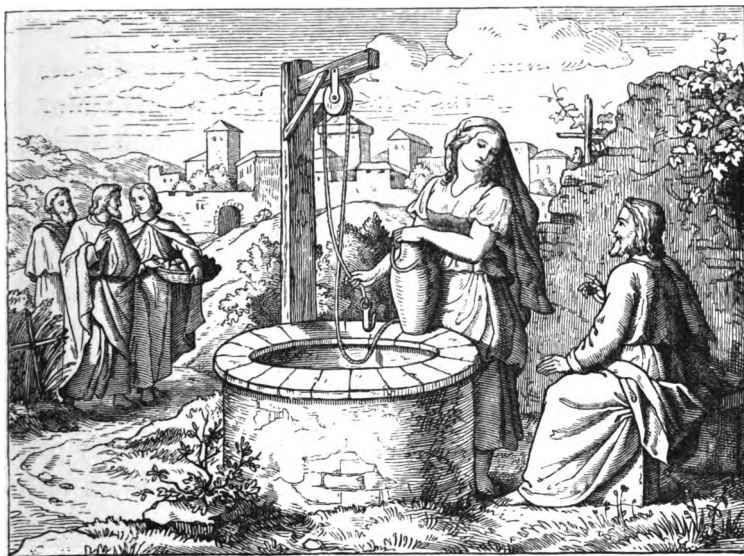
One day, just when the sun was hottest, Jesus sat alone

by this well, perhaps under the shade of some trees. He had come from Judea, and was journeying to Galilee. He had been walking many miles along the dusty road, and was very weary, thirsty, and exhausted. His disciples, who were not so tired, had gone a little further, into the town of Sychar, which was close at hand, to buy some food. I must tell you something of the people who lived in the city, and in this part of the country, between Judea and Galilee.

They were quite a different people from the Jews. Long ago, when ten of the twelve tribes of Israel had been taken away captive by the King of Assyria, he had sent people from other countries to fill up their places. They were called Samaritans, because that part of the Holy Land was called Samaria. The first who came were heathens, and worshipped idols; but by-and-by they learned something about the one true God, only they would not worship Him in the way that He had taught the Jews to do. They built a splendid temple on one of the hills I mentioned, Mount Gerizim; and they said that theirs was the right worship, and that the Jews were all wrong. The Jews disliked them very much, and looked down upon them. They would not eat or drink out of any cup or plate which a Samaritan used. And the Samaritans often ill-treated the Jews, if they got the opportunity. Was it not sad that neighbours should behave so badly to one another?

The Jews did not like to pass through Samaria, and if there were but a few travelling together they generally took a longer round to Galilee. But Jesus came here on purpose.

There was no bucket hanging at the well (as was the case with some wells), so that a thirsty traveller might get water for himself. But as Jesus sat there, a woman came from the city with her bucket to fetch some. Jesus asked her to let Him drink. She must have seen how weary and exhausted He looked. She must have known He had come a long, hot



journey. She might have seen in His face how full He was of love and tenderness—He would never speak an ill word to her. But instead of getting Him some water, she said, “How is it that you, who are a Jew, ask *me* for water? The Jews have nothing to do with the Samaritans.”

Was it not unkind? But Jesus did not reprove her for

it. He was very thirsty, and needed the water, but He cared much more about that woman herself. He knew she was not a good woman, nor a happy woman. And He told her He had something better than that water to give her, and that if she only knew, she would want it, and ask for it. He called it "living water." She was quite astonished, and said, "Where do you get it from? Are you greater than Jacob, who gave us this well?" Then Jesus said—

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

What a wonderful gift! Something which would last; which a person could have with him always. I daresay there are many things which give you pleasure, and make you happy for a time; but you have not got them always. You want to get them again, and again; just as the woman had to come every day to fetch water.

What is the living water? The Bible tells us very plainly. It is God the Holy Spirit coming down into a heart to make it new and clean and happy, and to stay there.

The woman did not quite understand this; but she wanted the gift. I think she felt thirsty in her soul. And she said, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not."

But you know if a house is to be made clean and fresh and beautiful, the dust and dirt that are in it must not be covered up and hidden away: they must be brought to the light and got rid of. And it is just the same with a heart.

So the first thing Jesus did for this woman was to speak to her about her sins. He told her He knew all about her life. And this must have been painful. I do not think we should like other people to know every bad thing that we have thought, or spoken, or done. But Jesus does know it all, and this is a comfort to those who are really sorry for sin, for Jesus can take it all away.

But the woman had no idea at first who it was that spoke to her, and, no doubt, she would have liked better to talk about something else. But Jesus wanted to make her really happy; to give her the "living water" which she had asked for. And by-and-by when she told Him she knew Messiah, or Christ, was coming, He said to her, "I that speak unto thee am He."

You remember how John the Baptist spoke of Jesus to the crowd in the wilderness. And yet only two of those who heard believed at that time. And though Jesus had done wonderful things at Jerusalem, the people there did not receive Him. But the woman of Samaria believed at once. And she was so glad, that she forgot all about the water she had come to fetch; she left her bucket by the well, and hurried off to the city. There she told the people about her meeting with Jesus. She was not sorry now that her sins had been brought to light, for she believed in the Saviour who takes away sin. She wanted others to come to Him, too. So she said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Some of them felt sure the woman must be right; others thought they would judge

for themselves ; so numbers of people left the city to see Jesus.

In the meantime, the disciples had gone back to Jesus with the food they had bought. They saw Him talking to the woman as they came up, and wondered why He spoke to her. As soon as she was gone, they begged Him to eat. They expected to find Him quite faint with hunger ; but He told them He had food which they did not know of. They said to one another, "Hath any man brought Him food to eat?" But you know that was not what He meant. What was it? He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."

He had been doing His Father's work ; He had saved that woman ; He had given her a draught of "living water." And He was going to give the same to many others besides. He saw in the distance the crowd hasting from the city, and the sight made Him very glad. They were soon beside Him—thirsty souls, all longing for what He alone could give them. They would not be contented with just a few words from His lips. They could not let Him go on to Galilee that day. They begged Him to stop with them. How delighted they must have been when He consented to go home with them. He had not then to ask for water ; they must have been so glad to bring Him all he wanted. Two happy days Jesus spent with them ; very happy days for Him, for He loves to save and bless ; and days that they would never forget—days that they must remember now in heaven—the days when they learned to know Jesus. For they learned a great deal about Him at

that time. They found that He had come into the world, not only for the sake of a few, but because He loved *all*. You remember how good old Simeon said that Christ was come to be a light to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. And these Samaritans said when they had found Him, "We know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

Now you see why Jesus went on purpose through Samaria.





CHAPTER XI.

JESUS AT HIS OLD HOME.

ST. LUKE iii. 19, 20; iv. 14-30. ST. JOHN iii. 26-36.



AFTER spending those two happy days in Samaria, Jesus went on with His disciples to Galilee. We know of one thing only which happened during this visit, and He does not seem to have stayed there long. I will tell you another time about that one thing.

You will be surprised to hear that there were some people in Judea who felt jealous when they saw others coming to Jesus, and the disciples baptising them in Jesus' name. Who could they be? Not bad men, not proud rulers, but actually disciples of John the Baptist! They were very fond of their master, and did not like anyone to be greater than he. It was very strange, for he had told them there was One coming who was far greater, and he had pointed out Jesus as the "Messiah" and the "Lamb of God." He spoke of himself as only a "voice," just speaking God's message, so long as it pleased God he should speak. And when these disciples came to him and complained, he told them how very glad he was to hear of the people going to Jesus. He was quite satisfied

to be forgotten, if he could see those whom he had taught learning now of the great Teacher. Was he not himself a true disciple of Jesus?

I cannot help thinking that he would have liked to go about with Jesus like Andrew, Peter, and the rest. But he stayed where God had placed him, and went on giving his message as long as he was able. He was soon stopped. There was a king reigning over Galilee called Herod. He was a son of the first Herod, who killed the babes of Bethlehem. This king had often heard John the Baptist preach. He felt that John was a great prophet, and minded many of the things he said. But one thing Herod would not mind. He had taken his brother's wife, whose name was Herodias, and had married her, and John told him how wrong it was, and that she ought to go back to her husband. Herodias was very angry, and persuaded the king to shut up John in prison. The Baptist had faithfully spoken the message God gave him, and now he had to suffer for it.

Are you surprised at this? It was painful for John; but it was really a great honour which God put upon him. It was like the honour He put on the babes of Bethlehem; only John knew that if he told Herod the truth he might be ill-treated for it; so he suffered willingly.

Did not Jesus care about it? We can none of us imagine how much Jesus cared for His servant in trouble! But He did not stop it. He was going by-and-by to suffer Himself; and one day He will give His servants a crown of glory for all their suffering.

John's work of preparing the way for Jesus was now finished, and Jesus Himself went forth to preach (Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. 14). He went to Galilee, and travelled from town to town, teaching in the synagogues, till He came to Nazareth.

You remember Nazareth, where the Lord Jesus was brought up as a child; where He had spent so many years working in the carpenter's shop. It was no longer His home. He had now no home of His own in this world. And His mother Mary seems to have been no longer living there. Still He must have loved the place very much. I do not think He had been there since He went away into the wilderness where John the Baptist was preaching. He had been absent some time. And the people who had known Him so long had heard strange news about Him. They heard of His turning water into wine at Cana; of His appearing in Jerusalem as a teacher sent from God; of His gathering His disciples round Him; of His teaching and healing in other cities. Now at last he was coming to Nazareth again. No doubt they wondered what He would do there. Would He work any miracles like those they had heard of? You can imagine how eager all must have been to see Him.

On Saturday, which was the Sabbath-day, He went to the synagogue; the same place where He had gone week by week with His parents as a child; where He had sat quietly, as the carpenter, among the other worshippers.

I must tell you about the synagogues. They were not built like our churches; they were more like a large school-room or hall. In some places they were built of white marble,

but most likely the one at Nazareth was a plainer building. There were seats for men on the one side, and for women on the other. At the further end there was a chest of painted wood, with a silk curtain over it. This was called an ark, and in it the Scriptures were kept. They had no printed Bibles like ours, but the words were written on great rolls of parchment. Even now, when anything important is written, it is done on parchment instead of paper, so that it may not get torn. In those days, when there were no printed books, these Scripture rolls were very precious. On one side was a raised seat for the person who was to read. There were seats in front for the principal men of the place, who were called the elders. One of these was called the ruler of the synagogue. And there was a man appointed to take charge of the Scripture rolls, who is called in the New Testament the minister.

The service was not like the Temple worship. In the Temple the sacrifices were offered. Here there was only prayer, singing, and the reading of the Scriptures, with something like a sermon. Any man who was known and respected as one acquainted with the Scriptures might stand up and read aloud out of the rolls. When he had finished, he might sit down and explain what he had read.

No doubt the synagogue at Nazareth was quite full on this morning. They would expect Jesus to stand up and read. He joined with them in the prayer and singing, and listened to the reading of the first lesson. This was always taken from the books of Moses, which were called the Law. When the time came for reading the second lesson out of the Prophets, Jesus

rose up and took the reader's place. The minister took from the ark the roll of the prophet Isaiah, and handed it to Him. Jesus unrolled the parchment, and read these words—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Were not those beautiful words for Jesus to read? Many a time they must have been read in the synagogue; and those who studied the Scriptures must have known them well. But who could it be who should do these things which were spoken of—heal the broken-hearted, give sight to the blind, &c.? The Jews knew very well that it was Messiah, the anointed one. And perhaps they wondered what Jesus was going to say about Messiah.

He rolled up the parchment, gave it back to the minister, and sat down. Every eye was fixed on Him. How beautiful and loving His face must have looked! He had been reading what was written of Himself. *He* had come to do these good things—*He* had come with this blessed message.

And so, as He began to explain the words—to tell them how God loved all—not only the rich and learned, but the poor and simple, too; how they might be saved from sin; how the sorrowful might be healed and comforted and made glad—they were astonished at the gracious, loving words He spoke. They had never heard anything like them before. The Rabbis, or teachers, could speak in a very learned and

eloquent manner, but they never preached good tidings to the poor. Even John the Baptist, whose message was really from God, had stern words to speak to them. For it was necessary men should be told of their sins, that they might be glad to welcome the Saviour. But the words of Jesus were full of tenderness.

So for a while they listened eagerly, just drinking in the sweet and wonderful sound. But by-and-by, when they saw what he really meant, when they found that He spoke of *Himself* as Messiah, their feelings changed. It was pleasant to listen to His words; but they thought to themselves something like this—"Who is it, after all, who is speaking to us? Why, it is only Joseph's son, the carpenter, who lived here so many years—just one of ourselves—and His relations are living here among us. And He calls Himself the Christ! He has not even done any miracle here; nothing to prove what He is saying!" But though Jesus had done no miracle, He did prove to them who He was. He knew all that they were thinking, and He told them He knew. And He could no more speak those gracious words to them. He had to warn them now of their sin in refusing to believe Him.

But while He was speaking, they grew more and more angry. At last they all started up in a fury, and dragged Him out of the synagogue, through the streets, and out of the town, up the path which led to the top of the hill. What were they going to do? The hill was rocky and steep on the other side, and they meant to throw Him down from the top, and thus to kill Him! Kill Him who had lived so long

among them and never done a wrong thing—kill Him who had spoken those loving words to them—kill Him who declared Himself to be the Messiah! Do you not wonder they were not ashamed and afraid? You see what bad passions will lead men to do, if they are not stopped.

So a second time Jesus was in danger. But were these cruel people to have their way? Was He going to die now? Jesus could not die until He had done His Father's work in the world. The time was not yet come. We do not know how it was that the fierce hands which held Him let go their grasp—how the angry crowd fell back: the Bible only says that "He passing through the midst of them went His way."

We do not know that Jesus ever came to Nazareth again, though He once visited the neighbourhood for a short time. He went across the hills to another part of the country, of which I will tell you in the next chapter.

But think what a grief it must have been to Him thus to leave the home of His childhood, the place where He had spent so many years of His life! He had offered the "living water" to His old neighbours and acquaintances, and they would not have it. They had rejected their Saviour; they had even tried to take His life. Their unkindness, their sin, their loss, all must have weighed heavily on His loving heart. The prophet Isaiah had written long ago that He should be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."—Isa. liii. 3. And you see how true the words were. He was willing to suffer, that He might bear our griefs and carry our sorrows.



CHAPTER XII.

THE COUNTRY BY THE LAKE.

ST. MATT. iv. 13-22; ST. MARK i. 14-34; ST. LUKE iv. 31-41;
ST. JOHN iv. 46-54.

I MUST tell you something about that part of the country where the Lord Jesus spent most of His time after He began His public ministry. By His *ministry* I mean His teaching and His going about doing good, of which you shall soon hear. I have already told you of two places in Galilee, Nazareth and Cana, both among the hills. If you were to start from Cana, and travel over the hills to the east, you would by-and-by reach a spot from which you would see, far down below, a sheet of bright blue water. This is the Lake of Galilee. In the Bible it is generally called the sea, the Sea of Galilee, the Sea of Gennesaret, or the Sea of Tiberias. The River Jordan runs into this lake at the north end, and comes out again at the south end.

You know rivers generally flow on till they reach the sea. Why is this? Because the land generally slopes and gets lower and lower down to the sea-shore, and water must always run down-hill. But the River Jordan never reaches the sea-shore. It finds its way into another lake, or sheet of

water, with land all round it, and it never comes out again. This is because the land does not slope down to the sea. The land where the Jordan flows is far lower than the sea-shore. It is the deepest valley in the whole world.

The Lake of Galilee is very beautiful. The hills rise up nearly all round it like a basin, though in some places there is room along the shore for towns and villages, and fields and gardens. The air is very warm, and in the days when Jesus lived there it was a most delightful country. There are still quantities of beautiful flowers there. Some are bright pink, and grow down to the water's edge. They are called oleanders.

But it was not for all this that Jesus chose to live here : it was for the sake of the people. No place in all the land was so full or so busy as this part of Galilee. There were Roman soldiers and Greek merchants, and many people from other countries, living among the Jews. There were workmen in the towns, and ploughmen and vine-dressers in the fields and vineyards, and fishermen on the shore. There were numbers of fishing-boats and pleasure-boats, too, on the lake. There were many people who loved money ; many who loved pleasure ; many anxious and sorrowful ones ; many sick and suffering ones. At the city of Tiberias was the palace of King Herod, and here there was much feasting, rioting, and wickedness. But the people generally were not so full of self-conceit as those at Jerusalem. They were more willing to listen to Jesus, and they were not jealous of Him, like those He had known so long at Nazareth.

Long ago, the Prophet Isaiah had written about this part of Galilee, "by the way of the sea." He said, "The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light." All the toiling and heaping up riches for this world—all the pleasure-seeking, while God was forgotten—all this was darkness. But now a voice was heard among them, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was the voice of Jesus. The Light had appeared.

Jesus had already some disciples in this country. Simon Peter and Andrew and John were fishermen on the lake. They had boats of their own; and Peter and Andrew were partners with John and his brother James and their father Zebedee. The three disciples had gone back to their work, and Jesus found them fishing on the shore. He called the brothers to follow Him again, and all four at once left their nets, and went with Him. Peter and Andrew were living together with their family in a town called Capernaum, very near the shore, and Jesus seems to have stayed in their house. How pleasant it must have been to receive such a guest!

There were others besides in the city who knew and loved Jesus. You remember that Jesus had spent a short time in Galilee after He left Samaria. He had been at Cana, where He had turned the water into wine. While He was there, a man came from Capernaum inquiring for Him. This was a great nobleman, one of those who were often with King Herod in the palace, a man with plenty of money and plenty of servants, and all that this world could give to make him happy. But he was in very great trouble. His dear boy lay

dangerously ill of a fever. He had ridden in haste up the hills to Cana, for he had heard something about Jesus' power, and wanted Him to come down and heal his son. He was in a great hurry, for he feared lest his boy might die before Jesus could get there.

But Jesus did not go with him. He could heal the boy without even seeing Him, and so he only said to the anxious father, "Go thy way ; thy son liveth." And the nobleman was satisfied. He believed the word of Jesus, and he did not hurry to get home again the same day, because He knew it was all right with his dear son. As he rode home the next day, his servants came to meet him. They thought they had good news for him. They did not know that he knew it already. When they told him the boy was safe, he asked, "When did he begin to get better?" They answered, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." This was the very hour when Jesus had said, "Thy son liveth."

The nobleman had trusted the word of Jesus, and now he had seen its power. He gladly told his servants about the wonderful Healer, and when he got home, no doubt he repeated it all to his dear son. They all believed in Jesus, and I dare say they spoke of Him to others in the city, so that many were eager to see him.

When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue, as He had done at Nazareth, and taking the place of the reader, He sat down to teach the people. They were all astonished at what He said. It was so different from what they were accustomed to hear. He spoke of a glorious, happy

kingdom, in which they might have a share; but He told them also that their hearts and lives must first be changed. Then His way of speaking was quite unlike that of the usual teachers. When these teachers explained a part of the Scriptures, they told the people what some other teacher before them had written about it. But Jesus did nothing of the kind. He spoke "with authority"—that is, as one who had the right to speak. He did not mention what other men had taught; His word was, "I say unto you."

And though He was no learned scribe or doctor, the people felt that He had the right to speak. They were not jealous of Him, like the men of Nazareth. And presently a proof was given them that He not only had the right, but that He had power.

Jesus was suddenly interrupted by loud cries from a man in the synagogue—"What have we to do with thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth . . . I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." What strange words! It was not really the poor man who said them, but an "unclean" or wicked spirit who had got power over him. In those days the devil had terrible power over the bodies of people, and those whom he thus tormented were called "demoniacs." We do not meet with such things now. Yet the devil has power over numbers of souls, and that is much more terrible. But Jesus would not let the wicked spirit speak about Him; nor would He let the man be tormented any longer. So He said, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." There was another loud cry, and the poor man fell on the ground, but the wicked spirit

had left him. He rose up unhurt ; he had been like a madman before, and now he had become like other men.

Think of the joy of the poor man, and of his friends, and the astonishment of the crowd. They could not cease talking about it ; they repeated the story to everyone they met, and the people in all the towns and villages round about soon heard of the wonderful Healer who was come amongst them.

When the service was over, Jesus and His disciples went back to Peter's house. They found Peter's wife's mother very ill. She had been taken with a violent fever, and was lying on her bed. Jesus went to her, took her by the hand, and lifted her up. Directly He touched her, the fever was gone. She got up quite well and strong, and was able to go at once and help to prepare the meal.

Numbers of people had left the synagogue that morning with hearts full of hope and gladness. Can you not fancy what they would be thinking about ? One would say, "There is my little boy at home, so pale and suffering ; surely Jesus will cure him too !" "And my blind father," another would think—"and my sick mother"—"and our friends who are out of their minds, and tormented just like that man in the synagogue." "Let us bring them all to Jesus ! He has the power to cure, and He is so good and kind." What news it would be to the suffering ones at home—"There is a wonderful Teacher come, who has told us about the kingdom of God, and who has actually healed a man with an unclean spirit !" How they would long to get to Jesus ! But it was the Sabbath-day. The Jews kept the Sabbath very strictly, and would

not carry burdens till it was over. They reckoned their days, not as we do, from morning to morning, but from sunset to sunset. The Sabbath was over at sunset.

So as soon as the sun was gone down, while the golden light still lingered in the sky, there began to be a great commotion in the streets of Capernaum. At every turn you would have seen people coming out of their doors. There were sick ones carried on mattresses; children in their parents' arms; lame men helped along by their friends; blind people led by the hand; strange, wild-looking men, like the one cured in the synagogue, urged along by those who pitied them; all the stream of people going one way—you know where—to Peter's house.

How they must have blocked up the door and the street on either side of the house! How glad were those who could get nearest! But it mattered very little whether they were close to the door or at the further end of the crowd; Jesus would not leave out one who came to Him. Think of Him passing along from one sick one to the other; how eagerly they must all have looked up at Him! how they would watch His movements! how their hearts would thrill when they heard His voice, so calm and yet so full of power, and saw one after another rise up at His touch well and strong! Every sick one in that crowd was healed. What joy there must have been in Capernaum that night!

Was not this a wonderful day? Jesus must have been very tired when He lay down to sleep that night; but I am sure He was happy. His joy must have been infinitely greater

than that of anyone else. For not even the fondest mother in the city could love her child as Jesus loved sinful, sorrowing men. At Nazareth they would not have Him ; but here they had been so glad to be taught, and helped, and healed. And above all, Jesus loved His Father. He had been doing His Father's work, and you know what He said about that to the woman of Samaria.

Jesus is just as ready to help now. He cares for us just as much as for the people at Capernaum. He does not always make sick people well when they ask Him, because He has better things than health to give them. He wants to give us all life in our souls, and happiness that will last for ever.





CHAPTER XIII.

A MORNING BY THE SHORE.

ST. MATT. iv. 23-25. ST. MARK i. 35-39. ST. LUKE iv. 42-44; v. 1-11.

HOW glad people are to get a good night's rest after they have had a hard day's work! They are not in a hurry to get up before it is time. But the morning after Jesus had preached in the synagogue, and healed all that multitude of people, He got up "a great while before day." While it was still dark He left the house, and went out of the city into a place where He could be all alone. What did He go for? He went to pray; He wanted a quiet time with His Father; He cared more to refresh His soul than to rest His body; and in the house He could not be alone. As soon as it was day, people began to inquire for Him, and Peter and the other disciples went out to look for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, "All men seek for Thee."

But he was not going to spend every day in Capernaum. He had told the people the good news of the kingdom of heaven, and had healed the sick. Now He must go into the other towns and do His Father's work there also. He went

from place to place, preaching in the synagogues as He had done at Capernaum, and healing the sick. Numbers of people followed Him from all parts, some from the cities and villages round about, some from the other side of the lake, and some even from Jerusalem and from other parts of Judea.

One morning He came down to the shore. There were crowds of people pressing round Him, for they all wanted to hear the word of God which He taught. In the midst of such a throng He could not speak so that those furthest off should hear. Looking round, He saw two fishing-boats drawn up on shore. The fishermen had been out all night in them trying to catch fish, and now they had come in, and were washing the nets. These fishermen were His own disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John.

Jesus got into one of the boats, which belonged to Peter, and asked him to push it out a few yards from the shore. Then He sat down, and preached to the people from the boat. You will wonder how they could hear. The air is so very clear in that part of the country, that a man standing on the shore can talk to another who has gone out some distance in a boat.

How sweet it must have been to stand on the shore of that beautiful lake and listen to the words of Jesus! I do not think anyone would have cared to look at the blue sky, or the bright water, or the flowers growing near. No doubt every eye was fixed on that wise and loving face, and every ear was drinking in the precious words. I should think that

was a morning that all would remember. It was one to be specially remembered by the four fishermen.

I told you they had been out on the lake all night. That was the proper time for catching fish. And though they might come to shore in the morning very tired and hungry, and perhaps chilled by the cold wind and spray, they would



not mind if they got their net full of fish. But this morning they had come in disappointed. They had caught nothing all the night. Jesus knew all about it. He knows when any one of us is disappointed. He feels for those who work hard, and seem to get nothing for it. He had got something for these men better than they had ever dreamt of. They

believed in Him ; they were very glad to hear His word ; they wished to please Him. . But they did not know that He could make all their life grand and beautiful, so that, although they might have troubles from time to time, they should never be disappointed in the end.

When He had finished speaking to the multitude, He told Peter to push out into deep water, and let down the nets. Peter was surprised. He said, " Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing : nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." You see he was a true disciple, for he did as Jesus told him, though he did not understand why.

How astonished were both the fishermen when there was a sudden tug at the net ! Not one fish, not a few, but a whole shoal were caught, so that when they tried to pull the net in, it began to break with the heavy weight. How came the fish there ? The men had been seeking for them all the night, and now, at the most unlikely time, they had such a haul as they never remembered before. They could not then stop to think, though their minds must have been filled with wonder. They had to get the fish to land. There was the other boat, close to the shore. They made signs to James and John, who were in it, to come and help them. With some trouble they managed to get the fish on board the two boats ; but when this was done, the boats were so heavy that they were in danger of sinking. But Jesus had not given them the fish to disappoint them again. All were brought safe to land.

Would you not expect them to give thanks to the Lord Jesus for this wonderful thing He had done for them? Peter was the first to speak. But there were no words of joy or praise on his lips. His heart was very full. He was not thinking of the fish, nor of the quantity of money he could get for them. There was one bright object before him which made him forget these things. He saw the glory of Jesus, His wonderful power and goodness. Even the fish of the sea obeyed Him, and yet He stooped to care for the ignorant fishermen! Peter fell on his knees, and said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Do you think it very strange? He had seen the glory of Jesus; he called Him not Master, but Lord; did he want to be parted from Him?

The sight of Jesus had made Peter hate himself. The brightness of Jesus showed him how dark and bad his own heart was. He felt that he was not fit to be near One so great and holy.

And Jesus understood. He knew Peter's heart; He knew that, in spite of all that was wrong there, Peter really loved Him. He came to forgive and save sinners, so He said to Peter, "Fear not." Oh, how glad Peter must have felt to hear those words! For he did not really want to be parted from Jesus. He would have been miserable if Jesus had left him. And that "Fear not" told him that Jesus knew and forgave all his sin.

But that was not all Jesus said; His words were, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." This was what

He was going to do with Peter's life. It was to be a life of blessing. Peter was to tell others of the Lord and Saviour he had found, and to be the means of bringing many to Jesus. And not Peter only. Andrew and James and John were to share in this happy life. Jesus had said when He called them before, "I will make you fishers of men ;" but they had not



known what He meant. And I am not sure that they understood now ; but they saw that He wanted them, not just now and then, but altogether. They did not stop to think what they would have to do, or how they would live, if they followed Him. They could not go on with their old life while He wanted them. They loved Him, so they could

trust Him, and from that moment "they forsook all, and followed Him."

Jesus does not ask everybody to give up his daily work. But He says to all of us, "Follow me." He wants many to work on in the place where He has put them. Only He wants us to do everything for His sake. And if we wish to do the little things He gives us to do, and look to Him for strength, so that all may be done as He pleases, He will not let us be disappointed.





CHAPTER XIV.

A DAY ON THE MOUNTAIN.

ST. MATTHEW v., vi., vii.; ST. MARK iii. 13-19; ST. LUKE vi. 12-49.

HTOLD you that the Lake of Galilee has mountains nearly all round it. There is one place where they slope back from the lake, and leave a green plain. This is called the plain of Gennesaret, and the lake is sometimes called, after it, the Lake of Gennesaret. Capernaum and many other towns were in or near this plain. To the south of the plain there is a hill which has two peaks like horns, with a level place between them, in shape something like a saddle. This hill is called Hattin.

You heard how Jesus went out of Capernaum to a quiet place, that He might pray. There were still multitudes thronging round Him, and again He wanted quiet. So He went up "into a mountain." Most people think this mountain was Hattin. From those peaks, and from the slopes around, there is a beautiful view over the lake and the plain of Gennesaret. It was evening when Jesus went up, and He stayed there all night, not resting His body in sleep, but praying to His Father. What a glorious scene He must have

looked upon when the morning came! the sun rising over the hills on the other side of the lake, and making the water shine like silver; the towns and villages lying so quiet down below; everything around so sweet and fresh and pure.

It was not only for prayer that Jesus had come here. He wanted a quiet time with His disciples, and at daybreak He called them to Him. He had work for them to do. All those multitudes that followed Him and thronged around Him needed to be taught, helped, and guided in the right way. When He looked at them He felt very sorry for them, because they were like sheep left all alone without a shepherd. He was Himself the great and good Shepherd, but He wanted under-shepherds to send out into the crowded cities and the numbers of villages scattered over the country. So He chose twelve men from the disciples, and called them *Apostles*—that is, messengers, or men sent out. You will guess who six of these were—the four fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, and the other two men who had joined Him on His first journey into Galilee—Philip and Nathanael. So we think. In the list of the apostles we find the name Bartholomew instead of Nathanael, but we believe it means the same, and that the two names belonged to one man. You will hear of some of the others by-and-by. But they were not sent out yet. They had to be with Jesus first for a time, learning from Him, going everywhere with Him, and seeing all He did. This made them fit to be His messengers.

I must tell you now of something else that happened on the mountain.

A great multitude had followed Jesus there. There were numbers who wanted to be healed, and all wanted to hear more from this wonderful Teacher. No doubt, many who came saw Him now for the first time, and were eager to hear what He would say to them. He had been preaching that the "kingdom of heaven" was at hand. Would He tell them about the kingdom?

I told you that the Jews expected Messiah to be a king, who should set them free from their enemies, and make them a great and prosperous nation, the greatest of all the nations of the earth. Was Jesus going to do this? And who would have the highest places in the kingdom? Of course—they would think—the great men, the priests, the scribes, and the Rabbis or teachers.

Imagine the crowds of people seated on the green grass just below the peaks of the mountain. In that clear air, as I said before, all could hear distinctly. Jesus was most likely a little higher up, where he might be seen by everyone. And these were His first words—"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Nothing about the rich or the learned! It matters nothing at all to Jesus whether men are great in the eyes of the world. He looks at the heart. And when He spoke of the "poor in spirit," He meant those who thought little of themselves; those who felt they were sinners and needed a Saviour.

He went on to speak of the people who belonged to the kingdom, and of the good things God would give them. He said nothing about those who were prosperous and happy—

who were getting on in the world, making money, and enjoying themselves—who had people always ready to do what they wanted, and who were made much of by everybody. He spoke of the mourners, the meek, those who longed after what was right, those who were kind and merciful to others,



the pure in heart, the peace-makers, and those who were ill-treated for doing what pleased God.

The people had always been told that if they kept all the rules the learned teachers gave them, they would please God. But Jesus told them no ; God required far more than that. They thought that if they had never committed murder, they had kept God's commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." But

Jesus said that if anyone was angry with another when he ought not to be, he had broken that commandment. They had been taught that if anyone ill-treated them, they might ill-treat him in return. But Jesus said, "Do good to them that hate you." They thought if they loved their friends, that was enough. But Jesus said, "Love your enemies." But why must they be so kind and forgiving? Jesus told them, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

They could look all around and see the sun shining brightly. It shone on those who forgot God as well as on those who tried to please Him. They saw the fields and gardens and fruit-trees in the plain below. What would these be without the rain to make them fruitful? God sent the rain down for all. He cared for all, as a tender Father cares for His children. You know that He so loved the world as to give His Son for us. And if we want to be true children of our Father in heaven, we shall wish to be like Him.

Jesus told them also how God would have His children pray to Him. They were not to say over a number of words without thinking what they meant. They were to ask for what they really needed. They were to come to Him as a little child comes to a kind father, and tell Him their everyday wants. But God's true children will think most of His glory, and wish every one to know and love Him. They were to ask for this first. Jesus gave them that beautiful prayer which we call "the Lord's Prayer."

“Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

I think many there must have been very glad to hear those words, “Your Father which is in heaven.” The Rabbis never spoke of God like that. Is it not pleasant to think it was the Son of God Himself who said those words, so that we may be sure they are quite true?

There were, no doubt, numbers in the crowd who had to work for their daily bread, and who were often very anxious about it, just as so many are now. Jesus knew how often the parents feared lest they might not have bread to give their little ones, and He gave them a word of comfort—“Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” He pointed to the birds flying over the plain, and said, “Behold the fowls of the air: . . . your heavenly Father feedeth them.” And then He looked at the flowers springing up all round, bright scarlet, deep blue, and other beautiful colours, and said, “Consider the lilies of the field . . . even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed (or dressed) like one of these.”

But there were some who were not simply anxious about the food and the clothing they needed, but who wanted to get very rich; who were toiling and putting by, not that

they might help others and do good, but that they might heap up riches. Jesus had a word for them too. The moth might get into their piles of clothing, and thieves might steal their money. He told them to lay up treasure in heaven, where it could never be lost. And He bade them all "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and then, He said, all these things that are necessary shall be given you.

There is much more that Jesus said which I cannot tell you now. But I must tell you about the end of this "Sermon on the Mount."

He knew that many who were listening so attentively, and enjoying the pleasant sound of His words, were just going home to live as they had done before. They did not want to become poor in spirit, or meek, or merciful. They did not want to bear any hardship for the sake of following Jesus and pleasing God. They did not want to alter their ways. They did not care about being like their Father in heaven. They were disobedient children, and they did not want to repent. So Jesus spoke these words of warning—"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Then He told them a very solemn story. It was about two men. Each wanted to build himself a house, and looked about for a good place to build it in. One chose the soft, sandy ground, such as they could see far down below towards the water. It was easy digging there. It did not take long to lay the stones ; they soon sank into the soft ground, and

the building quickly rose higher and higher until all was finished. Meanwhile, the other man had not got on nearly so fast. He chose a place on the rock, higher up. It was much harder working here, but at length the foundation was laid, and the house built firmly on it. One day a fearful storm came on. The rain poured down, the rivers overflowed, the winds roared furiously, and beat against the two houses. Very terrible it must have sounded to those inside; but one of the houses was quite safe. It was so firmly fixed, that neither the force of the wind nor the water dashing against it could move it. "It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." But what of the other one? It trembled as the wind beat upon it; it staggered as the floods dashed against it; the soft sand gave way beneath it. "It fell: and great was the fall of it."

Who would wish to be like the man that built his house on the sand? Jesus said that those who listened to His words, but would not do them, were like that foolish builder. They thought all was right with them, but one day they would find out their fearful mistake.

But those who not only heard, but did what He said, were on the Rock. Those who were "poor in spirit," willing to be nothing in themselves, but ready to trust in Him, and to obey Him, were safe, for He would never fail them. I wonder if any of those who were there remembered the words the Prophet Isaiah had written long ago—"Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength," or "The Rock of Ages."



CHAPTER XV.

THREE WORKS OF MERCY.

ST. MATT. viii. 1-13. ST. MARK i. 40-45. ST. LUKE v. 12-15; vii. 1-17.



YOU have heard of many different kinds of sick people coming to the Lord Jesus to be healed. I am going to tell you now about three persons of whom I think you would like to hear. When all those sufferers were brought out into the streets of Capernaum that evening after the Sabbath, the multitude had expected that Jesus would cure them. No doubt, it was the same with those who had been brought to Him since then. But with these three it was very different.

Here and there, all over the country, there were to be found people called lepers. They suffered from a dreadful disease called leprosy. It was most painful and most disgusting. The skin was covered with sores, and the different parts of the body wasted away gradually. Lepers were not allowed to come near other people. They generally lived together, outside the towns. If any man passed near them, they had to cover themselves with a cloak, and cry, "Unclean! unclean!" Then he would take care to keep out of their way.

Other sick people might be nursed and cared for by their friends, but these poor sufferers were cast out from their homes, and seemed to have none to comfort them.

No doctor could cure this terrible disease. We read in the Old Testament that it was sometimes sent as a punishment for sin. And sometimes, by the mercy of God, it was taken away. When a leper felt that he was cured, he could not at once go back among his friends. He had to go first to the priest. If the priest found that the disease was really gone, the leper brought two birds for an offering to God. One bird was killed, and the other was then dipped in its blood. After this the living bird was set free. The blood was also sprinkled over the leper, who was then pronounced clean, and was free to go where he liked. Do you think this a strange thing? There was a meaning in it.

God wished to give the people a picture of what sin is, and a picture of how it may be put away. That terrible disease of leprosy was like sin in the heart, loathsome and fearful. The slain bird showed that there was One who should die for the sinner, and that His blood could take away sin. It was a picture of Jesus Himself, who died for us to make us clean, and set us free. For "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."—1 St. John i. 7.

The news of the wonderful things that Jesus did had in some way reached a poor leper in the neighbourhood. Perhaps from a little distance he may have heard the passers-by speaking of them, and the thought came into his mind, "Perhaps Jesus will cure me too." But how could he get

to Jesus? He might not come into the city; he might not mix with the crowd; he had no friend who could go to Jesus and speak of his pitiful case. He was a poor outcast; he seemed beyond healing—too low down to reach Jesus.

But he did not give up. No one who wants to find Jesus should ever give up. I dare say he watched in the distance when the people brought their sick ones to Jesus. No one ever brought a leper with him! He saw them go up the mountain side to Jesus. He watched for their coming down. When the Sermon on the Mount was over, Jesus came down, and "great multitudes followed Him." The leper had still to wait. At last, when Jesus reached the little town below, the crowd began to disperse to their homes. An opportunity came, and the leper rushed boldly forward, and threw himself at Jesus' feet, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

I dare say the disciples started back in horror at the sight of the leper. But Jesus did not shrink from him. He might have cured him with a word. But instead of this He laid His hand upon the poor outcast, and said, "I will, be thou clean."

The man rose up cured. He was no longer a miserable outcast, with nothing but suffering to look forward to. The priest would pronounce him "clean," and he might go where he liked. You see no one is too low down to come to Jesus.

While Jesus was absent from Capernaum, a poor man had been taken very ill there. I told you there were many foreigners (whom the Jews called Gentiles) in this part of

Galilee, and this man was one of them. But he was not one of the rich merchants, nor even one of the soldiers; he was only a poor slave. His master was a Roman centurion, which means a captain of a hundred soldiers, though in fact many centurions had more than a hundred under them. I told you how cruelly the slaves were often used. But in this case it was different; the slave was dear to his master, who was greatly distressed lest he should die.

The Jews mostly disliked the Romans, because the Romans had conquered them. But this centurion had been a real friend to them. He cared for them, and had built them a synagogue at his own expense. So they respected him and liked him, and when they heard of his distress they were very sorry. They knew of One who could heal that sick man; but would Jesus heal a Gentile slave? They did not know that Jesus cared for all. They thought this slave might be too far below Him. But they would go themselves and ask. The centurion was very glad, for he thought he was not worthy to go to Jesus.

So the principal men of the town went to meet Jesus as He came into Capernaum. When He heard what they wanted, He said at once, "I will come and heal him." He was willing to go to the house of a Gentile, and to the bedside of a poor slave. But, as He was going, some people came from the centurion with this message—"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

How thoroughly this man trusted Jesus! He did not

think he deserved anything, yet he was sure that Jesus would be willing to heal his slave—he trusted His goodness. And he never doubted for a moment that Jesus could do it—he trusted His power. We are told that Jesus was astonished at the faith of this Gentile. And it made Him look forward joyfully to the time when Gentiles and Jews should be together in His kingdom. He said—“Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”

You see the Jews had made a mistake—no one is too far off for Jesus to help him.

Just think for a moment of all that Jesus had done that day. The night before He had spent in prayer. Then early in the morning He had chosen His twelve Apostles. He had passed the day in healing and teaching the multitude on the slope of the mountain. Then, on His way back to Capernaum, He had cured the leper. And lastly, He had healed the sick slave. Yet the next morning He must have risen early again, for He was going a long distance, longer perhaps than His usual journeys. He went right away over the hills to a place called Nain.

Nain was not very far from Nazareth. It was a pleasant spot, a little way up the slope of a hill called Little Hermon (there is another Hermon further north). From this place you could look all over the plain which, as I told you before, divided the country into two parts, and the view is said to be very beautiful. The name “Nain” means “fair” or “pleasant.”

But there was great sorrow in Nain that day. A young man had just died. He was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." How desolate she must have been! The neighbours felt very much for her, and crowds came to follow the dead body to the grave. As the sun was setting (for this was the time the Jews usually buried their dead), the sad procession passed through the streets of Nain. They were going outside the city, to one of the caves in the hill-side. This was the burying-place. But as they reached the gate of the city, they saw another crowd of people coming up the rocky path. Who were these? It was Jesus with His disciples, and a multitude following Him.

I wonder what the disciples thought when they saw that funeral approaching. They must have felt for the poor sorrowful woman who walked in front—not behind, as people do here. Perhaps they said to themselves, "If our Master had only come here sooner, He might have healed the man; but that poor dead body is past healing."

When people meet a funeral, they generally step on one side, to let it pass. And then the Jews usually turned and followed to the grave. How surprised every one must have been to see that Jesus did not step aside. He walked straight up to the sorrowing mourner in front, and said to her, "Weep not."

How wonderingly she must have looked up! She saw a face full of love and pity, the face of One who was grieved for her trouble. And yet He told her not to weep! She watched Him go up to the bier, on which the dead body of her son lay, wrapped in grave-clothes. She saw Him touch

it—a thing no Jew liked to do unless he were obliged. The men who carried it immediately stood still. What was the Stranger going to do? What could He do for one who was dead? They did not know that Jesus is “the Life.” But He said, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!” The voice of Jesus was enough. There was no longer a dead man



lying there. The living man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

None had seen such a miracle as this before. The news of it spread far and wide, and the people thanked and praised God, saying, “A great Prophet hath risen up among us,” and “God hath visited His people.”

You see no one is ever too far gone for Jesus to reach him. I do not mean that Jesus will raise those who are dead now because we want them back. He sees it best that they should die, and He will raise them all again one day. But some people are worse than dead—so far gone in wickedness that there seems no hope for them. But remember, no one is too low down to come to Jesus; no one is too far off for Jesus to reach him; no one is too wicked for Jesus to save him. He is “able to save to the uttermost.”





CHAPTER XVI.

A SABBATH AT JERUSALEM.

ST. JOHN V.



AM now going to tell you about a visit which the Lord Jesus paid to Jerusalem. It was at the time of one of the yearly feasts, but the Bible does not tell us which one.

There were many poor sufferers in the city who could not take part in any of those joyful feasts. And there was one place where a large number of them were gathered together. It was a pool of water, with a covered archway all round it. Under this archway lay a crowd of suffering people. There were some hardly able to move at all, whose limbs were withered and helpless—some who could just drag themselves along painfully, and some blind. What had they all come there for?

There was at certain times a strange movement in the pool, such as now and then happens in springs of water. At such times the water was likely to do good to sick people. The Jews thought it was an angel who moved the water, and they believed that the first person who stepped in when this

happened would be cured. For this reason they called the pool Bethesda, which means "House of Mercy."

Some of the sick people would get their friends to dip them in the pool. But there was one poor man who had nobody to do this for him. I suppose he had just strength enough to crawl to the place. Perhaps some one had taken pity on him and helped him there, for he lay on his mat by the water. But when he tried to get into the pool, others were before him, and he thought his case was hopeless.

On the Sabbath-day Jesus passed by the place, and looked at the sufferer. He knew all about him—knew that for thirty-eight long years he had been in this sad condition. Many people had passed by the poor, friendless man. But Jesus is a Friend to the friendless. He stopped, and said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

I dare say the man thought this a strange question. He answered that he had no one to help him into the pool, so that he was always too late. Perhaps he began to hope that Jesus might take pity on him, wait till the time came, and just help him in. How startled he must have been at the next thing he heard—"Rise, take up thy bed, and walk!"

How could he? It was quite impossible! He could hardly drag himself along the ground. But the voice he had heard could not deceive him. That would have been still more impossible. He felt that he must obey. He raised himself; he was able. He stood upright on his feet. Then, stooping, he lifted up his mat to carry it home. I suppose he would have stopped to thank the gracious Healer, but Jesus

was gone. A crowd was collecting round the place, and He did not wish to cause any excitement.

How happy that man must have felt! Instead of groveling on the earth, he was walking upright, well and strong. And he had learned a wonderful lesson. Jesus had not first healed him, and then told him to rise. Lookers-on might have said, when they heard the words of Jesus, "The man can't do it!" And yet he had done it. The command of Jesus made it possible. Yet if he had not believed and obeyed, he would have been a cripple still. Jesus had showed him how a thing that seemed impossible could be done by believing and obeying.

As the man passed along the street, he was met by some of the rulers. They said to him, "It is not right of you to carry your bed on the Sabbath. You know God's commandment is—'Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.'" But the Jews had added to God's command many foolish and unmeaning rules of their own, and if a man did not keep these rules, they said he had broken the Sabbath. The man replied, "The One who healed me told me to carry my bed."

The rulers, instead of praising God that this poor cripple had been cured, determined to do some harm to Jesus. They met Him, very likely in the Temple, and reproached Him because He had healed the man on the Sabbath-day. Jesus answered them that He had done just as His Father did. God never stops working. The world could not go on if His hand were withdrawn from it. The sun keeps on giving light to the earth; the corn keeps on growing for our food; even

the birds and beasts are cared for, week-days and Sabbath-days. And Jesus, the Son of God, is Lord of the Sabbath.

This made the rulers more angry still. They quite understood what He meant by saying that God was His Father. They said one to another, "He makes Himself equal with God!" They were so enraged, that they made up their minds to try and kill Him. But His time was not come yet. He was going to leave Jerusalem again; but before He went He told those rulers some things about Himself.

I do not know where they were assembled when He spoke to them. No doubt they began by saying scornful and bitter things against Jesus. But I think, while they were listening to His answer, His words must have filled them with awe. Angry as they were, they dared not interrupt Him while He spoke.

He told them that He and His Father did the same things, because they are One; and that it was God's will "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." These rulers were really opposing and dishonouring God, because they would not believe in Jesus.

Then He told them a very blessed thing. Whoever heard His word, and believed in the Father who sent Him, had got everlasting life. Were there any who had done that? His true disciples had heard His word, for they had believed and followed Him. They had "passed from death unto life." Because they were sinners, they deserved death; as sinners, their souls had been dead in the sight of God. But now they were alive, and should live with Him for ever, because they

believed in Jesus the Saviour. It is just the same with those who really believe in Jesus now—those who truly obey and follow Him. They are His for ever; they have everlasting life.

There were few then who truly believed in Him, but He said the hour was coming when many should hear His voice and live. Day after day He is now calling, and many hear His voice and follow Him. But He told them, too, of another day coming, when all must hear that voice, whether they will or no. It will reach down into the graves, into every corner of the earth, and into the depths of the sea, and “all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth.”

Then will be the great judgment, when some will enter into glory and blessedness, and some will have to bear the punishment of their sins. And the Lord Jesus Himself shall be the Judge.

How must the rulers have felt! The One who stood before them was no learned scribe, and yet they could not answer Him! They were seeking to put Him to death; and He spoke of raising the dead, and judging the world!

And Jesus left them no excuse for not believing in Him. He reminded them of John the Baptist, whom all believed to be a prophet. John had plainly pointed Him out as the Messiah. And there was even stronger proof for them than that. God Himself had declared that Jesus was His beloved Sôn. And though these rulers had not heard that wonderful voice from heaven, they had seen the miracles that Jesus did. They had just seen that poor cripple walking like other men.

And they had the Scriptures which God had given, where they might have found out about Messiah's coming.

One of the saddest things that ever fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus was what He said to these men—"Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life." You remember how a poor woman in Samaria had thankfully taken this precious gift—*life*; and these Jewish rulers would not have it. They were too proud to believe in Jesus of Nazareth.

Just think again for a moment who He was. The Son of God, equal with the Father; the One whose voice gives life, and raises the dead; the One who shall judge the world. And He was willing to be a poor man in this world, to be hated and persecuted, and one day to be killed. For from this day His enemies never ceased to speak against Him, and to try and turn the people against Him, that they might take His life. What David wrote in the Psalms was true of Jesus now: "Mine enemies would daily swallow me up."—Ps. lvi. 2. "Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?"—Ps. xli. 5. Was it not wonderful love which led Him to bear this for our sakes?

You will be glad to hear that the man who had been healed saw his Deliverer once more. He had gone up to the Temple, no doubt that he might give thanks to God for his cure. There Jesus met him, and told him to sin no more. Jesus saves us in order that we may not sin, but live a happy life, pleasing God.



CHAPTER XVII.

TWO SORROWING HEARTS COMFORTED.

ST. MATT. xi. 2-6; ST. LUKE vii. 18-23, 36-50.



YOU heard how the news of the wonderful things Jesus had done spread all over the country. They even reached a dark cell inside the walls of a prison. This prison was a strong fortress on the shores of the Dead Sea. Even the outside was gloomy; a wilderness of bare rocks all round, and in front the strange, salt lake, in which nothing could live, called the Dead Sea. But how much more gloomy inside. Fancy a small dark room like a cellar, with stone walls and floor, and only a little window with strong bars across it for the light to come through. Then not only was the door made fast with bolts and bars, but the prisoner himself had a heavy chain round him. Prisons are very different now. In those days, too, a prisoner would never be allowed to come outside of his dungeon unless the jailor had a particular favour towards him.

The prisoner who was shut up here was no evil-doer. He was a great and good man of whom you have already heard—John the Baptist. For many months he had been in prison. How he must have missed the trees, the river, the open sky,

with its sunshine and its starlight, and the pleasant breezes! How he must have missed his work! It was but for a short time that he had preached about the Messiah, and now it seemed as if he could do nothing more. I think he did not yet understand that he could glorify God by suffering patiently even more than by preaching.

Was he quite left alone? Not quite. Some of his disciples were able to come to him now and then. We are not told whether they only found their way to the barred window of the dungeon, or whether the jailor allowed them to pay him a visit inside. But they loved him, and would not forsake him. They brought the wonderful news they had heard, of the numbers cured at Capernaum, and the widow's son raised to life at Nain. It sounded strange to John. All this time it seemed as if Jesus had forgotten him. He had not been to see him. He had not sent him any message.

When a man is shut up day after day, without fresh air, without exercise, without any of the comforts we generally enjoy, his body often gets weak and sickly. And then the mind often suffers too, and he gets low and melancholy. John must have suffered terribly, and no doubt he wondered why Jesus seemed to take no notice of him. Now he heard of the mighty power Jesus had shown. Why, if it were true, did not that Mighty One come and help him—set him free from his dungeon? John could not understand it, and his disciples also were puzzled. So he bade two of them go to Jesus with a message. They were to say, "Are you really the Messiah, or must we look for another?"

They came to Jesus in Galilee, and delivered their message. Jesus did not answer them immediately. There were numbers of sick people round Him. He first cured them, and told them the good news of the Father's love and of His blessed kingdom. Then He said to the disciples—"Go and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached."

John knew well from the Scriptures that these were the things which the Messiah was to do. How could he doubt, when his disciples had seen these things? But there was another word for him—"Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." This means, "Blessed is he that will not be puzzled at what I do, but will trust Me."

We are not told whether Jesus sent any message besides, but I think these words must have been to John like the sunrise after a long and weary night. Jesus *was* the Messiah. John had not been mistaken when he pointed Him out to the crowds by the Jordan. He was doing His Father's work. And John must trust Him, though he might not understand. Perhaps he remembered how the Prophet Jeremiah had written—"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." But the words of Jesus must have been sweeter still—"Blessed is he that trusteth in Me." After that, he could trust and wait patiently.

There was another sorrowing one who needed comfort at this time. Not one who had served God; not one who was

called, like John, to honour Him by patient faith. A very different person ; a woman who had lived a very bad life, so bad that many people would have nothing to do with her. But now she was full of sorrow for all she had done. She had learned to hate her sin, and to feel it a heavy burden. What could have made this change in her ? I think she must have heard some of the words of Jesus. Perhaps she may have heard those blessed words—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. xi. 28.

She wanted to come to Him, for she believed in His love and pity. She wanted to do something for Him. Yet she felt that she was not worthy. The thought of her sin was very grievous to her.

She heard that He was to dine at the house of one of the Pharisees called Simon. Simon was a proud man, and I think it very likely he only invited Jesus out of curiosity, for he had no true love for Him.

When guests were invited anywhere, they were generally met at the door by the master of the house, who kissed them in token of welcome. Water was then brought for their feet, which got dusty in walking, because their shoes, or sandals, only covered the sole of the foot. Oil was poured on their heads, which was thought very pleasant, as I have told you before. They then took their places at the table. They did not sit on chairs as we do, but lay on sloping couches with the left arm supported by a cushion. There were two long tables placed opposite to one another, and a third at one end,

joining them both—something like the forms in a Sunday-school class. This upper table was considered the best place. The couches were placed round the tables on the outer side. The servants came to and fro in the middle, to wait on the guests.

The proud Pharisee did not welcome the Lord Jesus in the usual manner. He gave Him no kiss. No water was brought for His feet—no oil for His head. The Pharisee seems to have thought he need pay no respect to one who was poor. But Jesus went to His place without taking any notice of it.

The door was, as usual, left open, and strangers were at liberty to walk in and see what was going on. This was an opportunity for the sorrowing woman. She might have dreaded going into such a house, where people would look at her with scorn and contempt; but she thought only of Jesus. She came close up behind Him, weeping. She let her tears fall over the dust-stained feet, washed them in this way, and dried them with her long hair. She had brought with her a box made of alabaster, full of very precious ointment. She dared not anoint His head, but when she had kissed His feet she put the sweet ointment on them.

When the Pharisee noticed who was standing there, he felt very vexed and angry. He did not like such a woman to come into his house, and yet Jesus allowed her to touch Him. "Well," he thought, "of course if He knew what a bad woman she was, He would not let her do it, and He can't be a prophet if He does not know."

But Simon never thought that the Lord Jesus knew all that was in his heart—knew the proud and unkind thoughts he had just been thinking. And presently Jesus said to him, “Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.” He answered, “Master, say on.”

Then Jesus told him of a man who had two debtors—that is, people who owed him money. One of them owed ten times as much as the other, but neither had any money to pay the debt with. The creditor forgave them both. He said he should forget all about the debt, just as if it had never been, and they were to think no more about it. “Which of these two,” said the Lord Jesus to Simon, “will love him most?” And Simon answered, “I suppose the one to whom he forgave the most.”

Jesus then told him to look at the woman. She had done the very things he had left undone. How happy she must have felt to hear that Jesus had noticed it all—the tears, the washing, the drying, the kissing, the anointing with the beautiful ointment. And He knew why she had done it—because she loved Him. And she loved Him because she felt she was a great sinner, and He had forgiven her much. Simon thought he had no sins to be forgiven, so he had no love at all.

Then He spoke a sweet word to the woman herself—“Thy sins are forgiven: thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.”

How true it is that Jesus came “to heal the broken-hearted!”



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ENEMIES OF JESUS.

ST. MATT. xii. ST. MARK ii. 23-28; iii. 1-11, 20-35. ST. LUKE vi. 1-11;
viii. 1-3, 19-21.



YOU have heard in what an uncourteous manner Simon the Pharisee received the Lord Jesus. It is the first time we read of our Lord being ill-treated in this part of Galilee. There were some, too, at the Pharisee's table who did not like what He said to the poor woman. "Who is this," they whispered among themselves, "that He should forgive sins?" I must tell you a little more about these Pharisees.

They were people who pretended to be very careful to keep the law which God had given to the Israelites long ago. This is often called "the law of Moses," because God gave it through Moses. But in reality they were much more careful to keep the rules which other men had added on afterwards, rules which were not given by God at all. And in keeping these, they often went contrary to the law of God. They wished to be thought very holy, and they liked to say prayers, and give money to the poor, when others were looking on and

could see them. They wore strips of parchment, with verses from the Bible written on them. How much better it would have been had they kept the words in their hearts !

These men grew very jealous of the Lord Jesus. They could not bear that one who did not belong to them at all, one who had not even been taught by them, one who was only a poor man from Nazareth, should be set up as a great Teacher and Prophet.

And the people were flocking round Him more than ever. Jesus was taking another journey through the country, stopping at every town and village to tell them the "glad tidings of the kingdom of God." There were twelve men with Him wherever He went. You can guess who these were—the twelve apostles. They were to go out one day themselves to tell the people about Him, and they had much to learn first. Besides the apostles, there were some women who went with Him from place to place. They had money of their own, and they took care to provide food and other needful things for the party. They had all been cured by Him of some terrible disease, and they were so glad to do something to show their love and gratitude (St. Luke viii. 2). One was called Mary Magdalene. Another was Joanna, the wife of a nobleman named Chuza, who had to wait on King Herod. Some people think this was the nobleman whose son the Lord Jesus had healed, but we cannot be sure about it.

It is pleasant to think of the Lord Jesus travelling through this beautiful country. We can fancy what joy there was in every village when He drew near—how the men hurried away

from their workshops, or fields, or vineyards, to meet the great Teacher and Healer—how the women came out of their cottages, bringing the children with them—how the sick were brought to Him—how all listened to His gracious words, and praised God for the wonderful things He did.



But while He was thus “going about doing good,” there were enemies at hand.

One day Jesus was passing through some cornfields. His disciples were hungry, and they picked some of the ears of corn, rubbed them between their hands, and ate them. This was allowed by the law of Moses. God had given the

Israelites a beautiful, fruitful country—there was plenty for all—and He said that anyone passing through the fields and vineyards might eat of the corn and take the grapes when he was hungry or thirsty. But there were some Pharisees close by who had been watching. And when they saw what the disciples did, they complained to Jesus about it. Why? It was the Sabbath-day, and they said the disciples were breaking the Sabbath. Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." God gave that day as a precious gift to man—a time of rest for body and soul, not an occasion for finding fault with others. Then, because His Father's day was His day, He said, "The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

Another Sabbath-day Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues. The Pharisees were watching what He would do, for there was a man there with a withered hand. Just think how terrible—the poor hand hanging down like the dead branch of a tree—no more use in it! And it was his *right* hand (St. Luke vi. 6)—just the one he wanted most. The Pharisees were glad to see him there. Was it because they pitied him, and wished him to be healed? Oh no; they thought Jesus would be sure to heal him, and then they could say, "Jesus has broken the Sabbath!"

The Lord Jesus knew all that they were thinking, and presently He said to the man, "Rise up, and come forward." Then He spoke to the Pharisees, and asked them which was right, to do good on the Sabbath, or to do harm? They knew they were watching to do Him harm, and they had

nothing to answer. Then He asked, "If one of your sheep fell into a pit on the Sabbath, which of you would not pull it out again?" Again they had nothing to say, for they knew they would go and save the sheep, that they might not lose their property. They cared about that, yet they had no pity for the poor, helpless man.

We seldom read of Jesus being angry. Nothing but sin ever made Him so. But now we are told "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts."

He let them see how greatly He was displeased with their malice and cruelty, and then He said to the man, "Stretch forth thine hand." I told you the hand hung down useless; there was no power to move it. But the man believed in the power of Jesus' word, and obeyed at once. He lifted his right hand and stretched it forth before all the people, and immediately it became as strong and well as the other one.

It is sad to read what the Pharisees did. They were "filled with madness;" they went out of the synagogue, straight away from the place where God was worshipped, to talk over the best way to kill Jesus! There was another set of people whom the Pharisees disliked very much. These were called Herodians, because they were quite satisfied to be governed by King Herod, and to be under the Romans. The Pharisees, on the contrary, hated the foreigners, and longed for a king of their own. Therefore they disliked the Herodians. But now they went straight to their former enemies, and the two parties forgot their quarrels, and

held a council together to consider what they could do to Jesus.

But it was not yet time for our Lord's work to be finished. He had much more to do. So He went away down to the shore of the lake (St. Mark iii. 7), and spent some days there. Great crowds followed Him. They came not only from the neighbouring country, but from the other side of the lake and the River Jordan, and even from places far away in the north of the land. So great was the throng, that Jesus asked again for a boat, in which He might sit while He taught the people.

Numbers of sick people were brought down to the water-side that He might heal them. And at length, when He went into a house with His disciples, the people crowded in after them, so that they could not find a quiet time to take their meals. A poor sufferer was now brought to Jesus in a sad state. He was afflicted with an evil spirit, which made him blind and dumb. Jesus cast out the evil spirit, and restored the man's sight and hearing.

Some of the cruel Pharisees were watching all that went on. They were so enraged when they saw this wonderful miracle, that they said the most wicked things about Jesus—such things as I hardly like to write. They said He was not come from God at all, and that it was through the devil's power that He cast out the evil spirits. It was indeed the devil who put these wicked words in their mouths, and they were allowing him to rule them.

But I have another sad thing to tell you. Jesus' own

relations turned against Him, and tried to stop His work. They said, "He is mad," and they came, intending to take Him by force and prevent these things going on. They even persuaded His mother to come with them! How this must have grieved Him! For Mary had known long ago that He must be about His Father's business. No doubt she was afterwards very sorry that she had allowed them to persuade her. When they reached the house where He was, they could not get in for the crowd. At last somebody told Jesus that His mother and brethren were outside, and wanted to see Him. He knew very well what they had come for, so He only said, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" and then stretching out His hand lovingly to His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."





CHAPTER XIX.

A MESSAGE IN A STORY.

ST. MATT. xiii. 1-52 ; ST. MARK iv. 1-36 ; ST. LUKE viii. 4-18.



SUPPOSE my young readers like to hear stories. Most children do. And not children only, but grown-up people too are often very fond of them. But suppose your father or your mother were away, and you wanted to get news of them ; or suppose some treat had been promised you, and you were expecting to hear when it would come—would you *then* like a story ? If somebody came from your father and mother, and began to tell you a story, I think you would say, “Stop ! tell me first how they are ; do tell me plainly.” Suppose, on the other hand, you were careless, and paid no attention to the message your father sent you. Then the messenger might tell it in the form of a story, which you would listen to, and if you wanted to understand, you could ask what it meant.

You know that the Lord Jesus had been going about from town to town, and from village to village. He had brought the people very good news. He had told them of the love of their Father in heaven ; He had told them of the

kingdom He Himself had come to set up; He had invited them to come to Him. And a great many had listened very gladly. There was a crowd continually following Him, and listening to His words. And yet how few of them really came to Him with their hearts, and believed in Him as their Saviour and their Lord! They liked to come and hear, and yet they cared very little for the news He brought.

One day He began to speak to them in a manner He had never done before. He had told them the good news very plainly. Now He changed His way of teaching, and told them *parables*. Parables are stories with a meaning. And however beautiful the story may be, it can do nobody any good unless he sees the meaning of it. If anyone wanted to know what the Lord Jesus meant by the parables, he would have to come to Him and ask Him about it.

It was the afternoon of the day when the Pharisees had said those wicked things about the Lord Jesus, and when His friends had tried to get to Him and stop Him in His work. Jesus had gone out of the house again down to the shore. When the multitude crowded round Him, He got into a boat and sat down there. They all stood on the shore to listen to Him. Was it not strange that they should come to hear, and yet care so little about the good things He had to tell?

He did not begin with any verse from the Old Testament Scriptures. He did not say, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He did not say, "Come unto Me all ye that labour." They had heard these things before. He said, "A sower went out to sow his seed." That was the beginning

of the story. He then told them what happened to the seed; how some fell by the wayside and was picked up by the birds; how some fell upon ground which was hard and stony underneath, so that it could not strike a root; how some was choked among the thorns; and how some, which fell into good ground, sprang up and brought forth a rich harvest.

Next He told them about a field of wheat, and how an enemy who hated the owner tried to spoil it by sowing it all over with bad seed. Then about a grain of mustard seed, which sprang up and grew to be a tall and flourishing plant; and lastly, about a woman kneading dough, and putting a little leaven into it, which spread all through it. He said the kingdom of heaven was like all these.

We are not told that one person in the crowd came to ask what it all meant—how the kingdom of heaven could be like these things. I wonder whether *you* wish to know. You must look in the Bible, in St. Matthew's Gospel, 13th chapter.

When Jesus returned to the house for a short time, His disciples immediately asked Him to explain the parables. When Jesus had told them the meaning, it helped them to understand many things He wished them to know. If these things ever puzzled them, they could remember the parables, which made the matter clearer. He told them, besides, three other parables, which you will find in the chapter I have mentioned. I should like to tell you one of these.

Have you ever seen a pearl? You know that pearls cost a great deal of money, and are thought very precious. And no wonder, for they are brought from the bottom of the sea,

out of the shells of fishes. But at the time I am writing about, they were valued even more highly than they are now. People think more now of diamonds and rubies ; but in those days nothing was thought so precious as a pearl. Jesus told them of a merchant who traded in pearls. He tried to find all the largest and most valuable, and he may have collected a good number of these. But one day he discovered a pearl of great price. None of the others were to be compared to it. But he found it would cost him all that he had already. He must give up all the pearls he had been so long collecting, and for which he had paid so much money. But that one pearl was worth far more than all the rest put together. So he was not long in making up his mind what to do. "He went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

What had this to do with the kingdom of heaven ? Can you think of anybody who had given up all for the sake of one ? You remember the fishermen, Peter and Andrew, James and John ? By-and-by I will tell you of another man who did so. The apostles had left everything to follow Jesus. They did not yet know very much about the kingdom of heaven. But they loved Jesus, the King. When a man comes to Jesus, he enters the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus did not tell all men to leave their home and their business to follow Him. He wants many to follow Him *in* their home, and *in* their business. But those who really do so must give Him their whole hearts, love Him best, and be willing to give up anything for His sake. Such people will never be disappointed, for they have got the "pearl of great price."

Jesus did not stay long in the house. He was soon on the shore again, with the multitude crowding round Him. He must have been very tired after the long day of healing and teaching. There had been hardly time for Him even to eat anything. He could get no rest in this place. So He told His disciples He would go over to the other side of the lake. There, in the lonely valleys, or on the mountain side, they might get a little quiet and refreshment. The boat was at hand ; the fishermen were ready ; Jesus would not go back through the crowd to the house to get anything for the voyage, but started at once. "They took Him even as He was in the ship."—St. Mark iv. 36.

Before He got into the boat, a man came up to speak to Him.—St. Matthew viii. 19. He was not a simple fisherman or a labourer, but one of the "scribes," or learned men. This man said to Him—"Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." He seemed to desire the "pearl of great price," did he not ? But the Lord knew his heart, and knew that he was not ready to give up home and friends and position. He did not love Jesus best of all. So Jesus did not say "Come." He only answered—"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." As the hymn says—

"He who is the Lord most high,
Then was poorer far than I,
That I might hereafter be
Rich to all eternity."



CHAPTER XX.

A GREAT STORM AND A GREAT SUFFERER.

ST. MATT. viii. 23-34. ST. MARK iv. 37-41; v. 1-20. ST. LUKE viii. 22-39.

IT was evening when the Lord Jesus stepped into the boat to cross the Lake of Galilee. Darkness comes on very quickly in that country, and it was soon night on the water. Jesus was very weary, and lay down in the end of the boat to sleep, with His head on a cushion. How much he needed rest! You remember he had made Himself the Son of man, and so His body needed just the same things as ours.

Everything was calm and quiet when they started, but as they got further on the weather grew threatening. We read that some smaller boats had started at the same time.—St. Mark iv. 36. Perhaps they turned back and made hastily for the shore, for we are not told any more about them. Of course the disciples would not turn back, for Jesus had told them to cross to the other side. And they were, no doubt, accustomed to be out in stormy nights. But this night the storm was worse than any they had ever met with. The wind came rushing down a narrow opening between the

mountains, and burst on the lake with terrible fury. The boat was soon tossing about like a plaything upon the waves. The water poured in, and the men could not bale it out fast enough, so that the boat began to fill. "A few moments more," they thought, "and it will sink!"

In their terror they fled to Jesus. He was still sleeping. The roar of the wind and the thunder of the waves had not woke Him. The foaming spray had dashed over Him, but He had not noticed it. The tossing and straining of the boat had not disturbed Him. Think how weary He must have been to have slept through all this! But one thing He could not sleep through—the cry of the disciples—"Lord, save us! we perish." Some even added, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?"

Then He arose. The boat was full of water, the winds howling around it, and the great waves just ready to break over it once more. But Jesus said, "Peace, be still!"

The waves sank; the wind died away in a moment; the storm was at an end; "there was a great calm."

"He to the storm says, 'Peace, be still:'

The raging billows cease;

The mighty winds obey His will,

And all are hushed to peace."

But He had a word for His disciples too—"Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" They ought not to have been so terrified. They should have trusted Him to keep them safe. They seemed to have forgotten His power. And, worse still, some seemed to have forgotten His love, and

fancied He was no longer caring for them. What a proof they had now of His care for them, and of His power over all things! It seems strange to read what they said to one another—"What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Jesus was God as well as man. It was just as easy to Him to hush the winds and waves as to wipe a tear off a child's face. But though the disciples believed in Him and loved Him, they did not yet understand that the Man who lived among them, whose body needed rest and sleep perhaps even more than theirs, was also the Eternal God; that those waves and winds were made by Him, and could do nothing but what He chose.

How pleasant everything must have looked the next morning! They had reached the other side of the lake. It was wilder and more rugged than the western side. But the rocks and hills, the bright sunshine, and the calm waves rippling on the beach, must have been beautiful after the stormy night; and the quiet and loveliness would be very refreshing to them all. But the disciples little thought how much suffering there was close at hand.

There was a city a little way off. None of the people (called Gergesenes) who lived there ever ventured to come down to this part of the shore. For among the tombs on the hill-side there lived a man who was worse than mad. He was a demoniac, like the man whom Jesus had healed in the synagogue at Capernaum. The devil had got power over his body, and he was tormented by wicked spirits. But he was

worse off than any of the sufferers who were brought to Jesus. His friends could not take care of him. They had tried to bind him with chains, to prevent his doing harm to himself and others, but it was of no use. He broke the chains and escaped. Then he wandered about on the hills, crying out, and wounding himself with sharp stones. He was so fierce that no one dared come near him. There seemed to be no help and no hope for him.

But the wretched man had seen Jesus a long way off, and rushed down to the shore to meet Him. He must have been a fearful object to look at. But Jesus did not turn away. He had come "to destroy the works of the devil." That poor man was bound with worse chains than any prisoner in a dungeon, and Jesus had come to set him free.

He commanded the evil spirits to come out of the man. On the hill above there was a large herd of pigs feeding. Suddenly the whole herd—about two thousand—started up in wild excitement, and rushed furiously down the hill, across the narrow strip of beach, tumbling one over the other, till they fell into the water and were drowned. The evil spirits had gone into that herd, and the man was free.

The men who had charge of the pigs were astonished and terrified. They hurried away into the city and told what had happened. All the people came out in great fear and wonder to see Jesus. He was by the side of the lake, with the disciples round Him, and the man whom He had saved sitting at His feet. Every eye was turned on this man. They all knew him well; they had seen him wild and furious,

tearing off his clothes, breaking his chains, threatening every one who came near him. Now he sat humbly and quietly at the feet of Jesus, with a calm and happy face, telling of joy and gratitude. Would you not think they must be very glad? On the contrary, they were frightened at the power of Jesus, and grieved, I suppose, at losing the animals. There was not a word of praise or thanks for the wonderful miracle. They only begged Jesus to go away out of their country! How unkind and selfish! They must have seen how weary He looked; they might have offered Him rest and refreshment. And how foolish and wicked! He "went about doing good," and they would not have Him. They refused their best friend.

When the rescued man saw that Jesus was going away again, he begged that he might go with Him. But Jesus had something else for him to do. He was to return to his home, and tell his friends how the Lord had delivered him. The man obeyed. He not only told his friends, but he went all over that country and made it known everywhere, so that numbers of people heard of the power and love of Jesus in places where His name had never yet been mentioned. We might call this man the first missionary.





CHAPTER XXI.

THE GOOD PHYSICIAN.

ST MATT. ix. 1-26. ST. MARK ii. 1-17; v. 22-43. ST. LUKE v. 17-32;
viii. 40-56.



HILE the Gergesenes were begging the Lord Jesus to go away from their country, there were many people wanting Him on the other side of the lake. They were waiting and watching for His return. They saw His boat draw near the shore, and gave Him a glad welcome as He landed. The crowds were as great as ever. When He went into the house at Capernaum, such numbers followed Him that the door was quite blocked up.

I must tell you something about the Jewish houses. They were built in the form of a square. If you had gone in at the front door you would have passed through a porch into an open court in the middle of the house. This was also square, and the rooms were built all round it. There were seats in the court, and very often there was a fountain. The family often assembled here, and there was generally a thick cloth spread over the top to shelter them from the sun. There were steps outside the house which led up to the roof. From

the roof you could look down on the streets outside and on the square court inside. People were fond of sitting there in the cool of the evening after the sun had set, and often they laid their mats down and slept there. There was a parapet all round on both sides to prevent anyone falling off by accident.

The news that Jesus was come back brought all kinds of people together. As He sat in the court of the house and taught, there were not only the poorer people listening, but learned men, scribes and doctors who had come from different parts of the country. I am afraid *they* had not come to welcome Him.

There were four men outside who were very anxious to get to Jesus. They had brought a sick friend, a man with the palsy, lying helpless on his mat. They could not get in at the door. But they would not be disappointed. They climbed up the outside steps, and carried their friend on to the roof. Then they took away some of the tiles of the parapet, pushed aside the awning over the court, and with strong ropes they let down the mat with the sick man lying on it, right into the midst of the circle that surrounded Jesus. He was pleased with the faith of these men. He knew exactly what the sick man needed. He knew there was something which troubled him more than his sickness and helplessness. As he lay there on his mat, he was carrying a heavy burden on his soul. Jesus would first lift off this burden. So He said to the man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee!"

Do you remember when He had said this before? When

the sorrowing woman stood behind Him and washed His feet, He said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Those who sat by had been displeased, and the scribes who heard Him now were still more angry. They did not dare to speak their thoughts aloud, but they said in their hearts, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?" They would not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and one with His Father. He knew what they were thinking, and said, "What reason ye in your hearts?" Then He showed them how truly He had the right and the power to forgive sins. Turning again to the sick man, He said, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

Immediately the man rose up. The wondering crowd saw him lift up his mat and walk away with a firm step and a joyful face, praising God, for he was healed both in his soul and in his body. The enemies of the Lord Jesus dared not complain. They were filled with fear, and said to one another, "We have seen strange things to-day."

They were presently to see another thing which seemed to them very strange. The same day Jesus was asked to a feast. This time it was not a scornful Pharisee who invited Him, but one of His own disciples. The man's name was Levi, and also Matthew, and he is generally called Matthew. I must tell you what he had been before He followed Jesus.

Perhaps you know that in our country many people have to pay taxes to the Government. Those who govern do not spend the money on themselves. It goes to pay for many things which are needed in order that the country may be

properly taken care of. This is well done in England, and there is no other country so safe or so comfortable to live in. But, as I have told you, the Jews were governed by the Romans. They had to pay taxes to them, and the money was not often spent for the good of the Jews. The Romans used it as they liked. The Jews would not have minded paying money to a king of their own, but they could not bear paying it to the Romans. They thought those who were willing to collect the taxes were mean and cowardly. And in fact these tax-gatherers (called publicans) were generally bad men. They took more than they ought, in order to keep it for themselves, and so they got rich.

One of the high roads of the country was close to Capernaum. Merchants were constantly passing by with their goods. A publican was employed to take "toll" from them, and also from the boatmen who went fishing on the lake. This had been Matthew's business. Day by day he had sat there, with his table and his money-bags, adding to his store. No doubt he had often seen and heard Jesus. But one day as Jesus passed by, He looked at Matthew, and said, "Follow Me!" At once the publican rose up, left his gains, and followed the Lord. He was one of the twelve apostles whom Jesus chose.

You will wonder why Matthew wanted to make a feast. He had not forgotten his old friends and companions. He could not join any more in their business or their pleasures. But he wanted them to give up their sinful ways, and come to Jesus too. So he asked them to his house, and there Jesus

met them. This made the scribes and Pharisees very angry. They were afraid to speak to the Lord Himself about it, so they came to His disciples and said, "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" But Jesus heard it, and answered for them. He said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

What would they have thought of a physician (or doctor) who only visited those who were quite well? A doctor's business is to look after the sick. Jesus had come to heal. He was the "Good Physician," who did not turn away from the worst cases, and who was able to cure the worst. These publicans and sinners needed to have their souls cured. They knew it, and were willing to come, while the proud Pharisees thought themselves in need of nothing. So He told them—"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

There were also some disciples of John the Baptist who were astonished to see Jesus at a feast, and came to ask what it meant. But while he was talking to them (St. Matt. ix. 18), a man came to him in great distress. This was not one of the despised publicans, but one of the chief men of the city, a ruler of the synagogue. You see rich and poor, high and low, had need of the Good Physician.

The man's name was Jairus. He was in trouble about his little girl. She was only twelve years old, and she was lying sick on her bed, at the point of death. "Come," he asked Jesus, "and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live." Jesus at once rose and went with him, and the

disciples followed. They could not go very quickly, for the crowd pressed round them at every step. How anxious the poor father must have felt!

In this crowd was a sick woman, who wanted to get near the Healer. She had been a sufferer for twelve years—just as long as the daughter of Jairus had lived! And all that time she had gone from one doctor to another, till her money was spent, and yet instead of getting better she was growing worse. At last she had heard of Jesus. She made her way through the crowd to get to Him; but she was timid and retiring, and dreaded having everybody's eyes upon her. So she managed to get behind Him, and put out her hand to touch the border of His robe. She was so sure of His power to save, that she believed that would be enough. And directly she touched it, she felt that she was cured. No one noticed what she had done; but Jesus knew all about it. He stopped, turned round, and asked who had touched Him. The disciples were astonished at His asking, for numbers of the crowd must have touched Him. But He said again, "Somebody hath touched me." For this woman's touch was very different from that of the crowd. She touched Him because she wanted something, and expected to get it. And she expected to get it because she *trusted* Jesus. This was *faith*.

She had hoped to be hidden. But Jesus now wanted something from her. She must confess what He had done for her, that others might learn to trust Him also. So she came forward trembling and fell at His feet. Then she told

out everything, so that all could hear. And she got something more—a sweet word from Jesus—“Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”

I wonder how the ruler felt while he was waiting. His little girl might be dead before they reached her. I wonder whether he learned to trust Jesus as that woman had done.

While Jesus was speaking, a messenger hastened up to Jairus. “It is of no use,” he said, “your daughter is dead; don’t trouble the Master.” But before the poor father could reply, the Good Physician comforted him with the words—“Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.”

When they reached the house, there was quite a crowd of people there. The Jews had a strange custom of hiring persons to come and mourn for the dead. This was done by tearing a corner of the dress, beating the breast, crying and weeping. Some made music, and sang mournful songs. These things are still done in Eastern countries. When Jesus saw it He said, “Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.”

The mourners laughed rudely and scornfully, for they did not believe in the power of Jesus. But He made them all go out of the room where the little girl’s body lay, and went in with only the father and mother, and Peter, James, and John. Then He called her gently, just as though He were waking her up in the morning. The words He said were, “*Talitha, cumi!*” And that is just as if He had said, “Dear child, get up.” Her spirit, or soul, came back; she rose up from the bed and walked. She was alive and well again

But Jesus would not let the people outside come in and see her. He would not have the little girl excited and frightened. He told her parents to keep it all quite quiet, and to give her something to eat.

How much the good Physician cared for this child ! He not only raised her from the dead, but saw that she was cared for afterwards. He thought of things which the parents, in their great joy, might have forgotten. And He is just as loving and kind now, caring not only for men and women, but for every little child.





CHAPTER XXII.

A HUNGRY MULTITUDE.

ST. MATT. ix. 36-38 ; x. ; xi. 1 ; xiv. 3-21. ST. MARK vi. 7-44 ;

ST. LUKE ix. 1-17. ST. JOHN vi. 1-13.

 HE Lord Jesus was again travelling through Galilee with His disciples. He found multitudes of people who needed to be taught, and who were ready to hear His words. No one else had ever told them the good tidings of God's love, and their minds were very dark and ignorant. Jesus was very sorry for them, and wanted all to hear the good news. You remember how He had chosen twelve apostles that He might send them out to preach. The apostles had been with him some time. They had heard His teaching and seen His miracles. So now they were ready to go and tell others what they had learned themselves. Jesus told them exactly what to do, and gave them power to heal the sick and to cast out evil spirits. Then they went out in different directions two and two together.

There was one faithful preacher who had long been silent. All this time John the Baptist had remained shut up in prison. And while the apostles were on their first missionary journey,

the time came for the prisoner to be set free. But it did not come as you might have expected. He was not to live in the wilderness again; he was not to go back to his work: that work was done. He had preached, and he had suffered, and now his spirit was to go home to God. Yet the way seemed dreadful. He did not die of sickness. He did not die of old age, for he was still young. You know he had a cruel enemy, Herodias, whom King Herod had married. She sent her daughter to dance before Herod on his birthday, and the king was so pleased that he took an oath to give the young girl whatever she liked to ask. Her mother told her what to say, and she asked for the head of the great and good man who was shut up in prison. Herod was grieved when he heard what she wanted. But he was afraid of being laughed at and reproached if he broke his promise, so he actually sent a man to the prison to murder John the Baptist, and then he gave the wretched girl what she had asked for.

The way indeed seemed dreadful. But think how quickly the martyr entered into rest, where no enemy could ever hurt him any more! How happy for him to change his dungeon for a bright dwelling-place above!

His disciples took the body and buried it. Then in their sorrow they thought of Him their master had loved and served, and whom he had wished them to love and serve. They went and told Jesus.

Did Jesus care about it? We know He did, for it is written in the Bible—"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."—Ps. cxvi. 15.

Jesus was at this time by the shore of the lake, either at Capernaum, Bethsaida, or one of the other towns. He was still surrounded continually by a crowd of people, and had no leisure to take a proper meal. He must have wanted rest very much. And when the news came to Him of the death of His faithful servant, He must have wished to be alone a little. People in sorrow are very glad to be quiet. Just at this time, too, the twelve apostles came back from their journey. They had much to tell their Master, and they were needing a little rest also. Jesus said He would cross over the lake to a quiet spot on the other side. They went away quietly (Mark vi. 32; Luke ix. 10); very likely, I think, at early morning, before the people were stirring. But their boat was seen before it had got very far from the shore, and a crowd of people at once started to follow them. They ran along the shore, keeping the boat in sight. I suppose the winds were contrary, for it went very slowly, and the people on shore got on the fastest. The crowd grew thicker and thicker, for many joined them on the way.

The party in the boat landed in a pleasant spot. There were green hills sloping up from the lake, and the place was called "desert," or, as we should say, quite in the country. I suppose that generally there was hardly any one passing that way. But on this morning, when the Lord Jesus stepped on shore with His disciples, the multitude were all ready to receive them. It must have been a great disappointment to the disciples. They had had a quiet time with their Master in the boat, but they wanted more, and expected it. And

Jesus needed rest most of all. But He showed no disappointment. He did not think of Himself. He looked at the multitude, and His loving heart went out towards them. They needed so much. They were ignorant, weak, and sinful ; and no doubt there were many sad hearts among them. They had come all this way because they felt that they wanted something. They were hungry in their souls. And they were right to come to Jesus. There were sick persons also amongst them, brought by their friends to be healed. .

The Good Physician healed the sick, and then He "spake unto them of the kingdom of God." Hour after hour they hung on His words, and never noticed how the day was passing on, and how the sun was sinking lower and lower in the western sky.

But the disciples noticed it, and it troubled them to think that night was coming on, and the people must be very hungry. They came and asked Jesus to send them away, that they might go to the nearest villages and buy some food. But Jesus would not do this. He said to His disciples—"They need not depart ; give ye them to eat."

How could they do that ? All the money they had would not buy enough, for there were five thousand men, besides women and children. Then Andrew said there was a boy with them who had five loaves and two fishes ; but of what use could such a little be ? Jesus answered, "Make the men sit down."

It was a beautiful place for them to take their meal. I can fancy how the setting sun would throw a beautiful rose-

colour over everything around, and paint the lake below a bright crimson.

They sat down on the green, soft grass, in long rows, about fifty in each row. Perhaps you have seen a large school taking their meal out on the grass; but you never saw such a number as there were here. If we only counted the men, there would be a hundred of those long rows, and you know there were women and children besides. It must have been a pretty sight to see them sitting there in order, all looking up with wonder to see what the Lord Jesus was going to do. By this time, I have no doubt, they felt very hungry, though they had forgotten all about it while they were listening to the wonderful Teacher.

They saw the five loaves and the two fishes brought to Jesus. Then they saw Him look up to heaven and give thanks to His Father for the food. Then they saw the bread broken and the fish divided, and pieces given to each disciple. The disciples came round in order, going along every row, and giving some of the food to each person. You would have thought each piece must soon have come to an end. But it was not so. If half was broken off and given to some one, there was still plenty left. Though they kept on giving to each person, their hands were never empty. There was always some left, until all had had enough. Every man, woman, and child in that vast multitude was perfectly satisfied.

Where did all this food come from? The five loaves and two fishes alone would hardly have gone along one row

of people. Yet Jesus had fed all. He had provided food out of nothing—He had created it. Yet He chose to use the food the disciples had already, so that they might never say, “We have too little to be of any use.” And He would have none of it wasted. There were broken pieces lying about which the people had left. He told His disciples to “gather up the



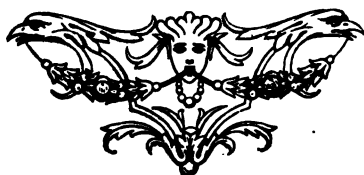
fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” When all the pieces were picked up, they filled twelve baskets.

Do you not think the disciples must quite have forgotten their disappointment? They had never seen such a sight before. Yet this miracle was but a glimpse of the power and love of Jesus. It seemed far greater to feed this multitude

than to satisfy one hungry soul. Yet none but God could do either. And Jesus is the Almighty God, one with the Father.

Jesus is just as able and as willing now to give the needful food to those who trust Him. If He does let them want for a time, it is that He may give them something better in their souls. But if we are His true disciples, we must remember His words—"Give ye them to eat." If He gives us plenty, He means us to give to others. If He only gives us a little, He means us to do what we can with that little. And if we do what He wishes, He is sure to bless us.

And He still cares for the hungry souls. He gives the true "Bread of Life," and no one can ever be really satisfied without that. And He is always ready to give it. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."—Ps. cvii. 9.





CHAPTER XXIII.

BREAD FROM HEAVEN.

ST. MATT. xiv. 22-36. ST. MARK vi. 45-56. ST. JOHN vi. 14-71.



TOLD you in the last chapter how the Lord Jesus provided for the hungry multitude. They were all filled with wonder at the miracle. They said, "This is certainly the Prophet we have been expecting; this is Messiah; let us make Him our King." The words passed from one to another. They grew excited. They could not wait. They must take Jesus with them at once, set a crown on His head, and proclaim Him King of the Jews. None would refuse to obey a King who could do such wonders.

No doubt the disciples were very much pleased. They had looked forward to the time when their dear Master should be a King, and I dare say they thought it was come. They did not understand that He must first suffer and die. And they would have been ready to help the people. But Jesus would not listen to them. His kingdom was to be very different from anything that multitude were thinking of. He told His disciples to go at once to their ship, and cross over the lake again. They were very unwilling to do it.

They had to go without Him, and they could not understand why. It must have seemed very strange and very dismal. But Jesus' command must be obeyed. He "constrained" His disciples.—St. Matt. xiv. 22 ; St. Mark vi. 45. So they went sorrowfully away to their ship.

When they were gone, Jesus quieted the excited multitude, and sent them away. It was probably moonlight, being near the time of the Passover (St. John vi. 4), so that they could easily take the journey back to their homes. But some preferred staying close by, either spending the night in the open air, or in the nearest villages. They knew that Jesus had not sailed away with His disciples, and no doubt they hoped to find Him again in the morning. When all had dispersed, Jesus went up the mountain to spend the night in prayer alone with His Father.

The disciples had perhaps hoped that Jesus would come to them later in one of the small boats ; and they may have lingered, waiting for Him. But they were disappointed. Night came on, and they had to sail without Him. They had a rough voyage. The wind was against them. Soon they had to take down the sails and pull with the oars. Still they got on slowly and with difficulty. When they were more than half-way across, the sea grew rougher. Their boat was tossed up and down on the angry waves. A short time ago Jesus had been with them in the storm, but now they must have felt very lonely and helpless. But He had not forgotten them. From the hill-top He watched their little boat in the distance, and saw them "toiling in rowing." His

people are never really left alone. We read in the Psalms—"Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy.—Ps. xxxiii. 18.

At last, when the night was nearly over, they saw a figure in the distance moving across the water. What could it be? It came nearer, and seemed as if it were going past the ship. They were so terrified that they cried out for fear. Then a well-known voice said, "It is I; be not afraid!" The Lord Jesus had come to them across the stormy waves. How full of wonder and joy they must have been! They had imagined Him far away. And here He was, close at hand; all would be right now. Peter was so overcome with delight to see his Lord walking on the water that he asked Jesus to call him, that He might walk there too. And Jesus said, "Come." So Peter jumped out of the boat, and walked on the water.

But how could he do it? You know if you were to step upon the water, you would soon sink under it and be drowned. Peter could do it because Jesus told him, and because he trusted Jesus. When Jesus tells us to do anything, He makes us able, if we trust Him. But presently Peter turned to look where he was walking. He saw the waves raging and the spray dashing over his head; his eyes were off Jesus, and he was frightened. He had forgotten to trust Him. That moment he began to sink in the dark waters, and he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

As soon as the Lord Jesus came into the ship the storm

ceased. And when the morning came, they had reached the shores of Gennesaret.

The news quickly spread through the country that Jesus was come. All the people were anxious to see Him again. They came flocking out of the towns and villages, bringing friends with them to be healed. And in some places the sick were laid on their mats in the streets and roads where He would pass. They begged that they might just touch the hem of His robe, and all who touched were perfectly cured. They had learned something from that woman who touched Him in the crowd.

The people who had remained all night on the other side of the lake were disappointed and puzzled. They knew that Jesus had not gone away in the ship with His disciples, and there was no other one that He could have taken. Yet they could not find Him anywhere. At last, when some other boats came to the place, they got into them, and crossed over the water to look for Him. They found Him at Capernaum.

Do you think the Lord Jesus was pleased that these people were so anxious to find Him? He knew why they came. It was not because they really loved Him. It was not because they wished to lead a new life. They wanted only the good things of this world. They would have liked a King who could provide for them as He had done. He was sorry to see how little they cared for the better things which He had come to bring. He told them not to be anxious for things that would soon pass away, but for things which would last.

Jesus had done many miracles in Capernaum, and had

taught the people about the kingdom of God. But He had not told them much about Himself—not as much as He had told the rulers in Jerusalem. Now He was going to do it once, and He did it on the Sabbath-day in the synagogue. There must have been a great crowd gathered together there. Everybody would be anxious to hear Him after the wonderful miracle He had done on the other side of the lake. They had heard that He would not be made a King, and they would be curious to know why. I dare say they were hoping He might still be persuaded. For they would have liked a King who could provide all they wanted without their having to work for it.

So He began to speak to them about food. Their souls needed to be fed as well as their bodies. And no food can keep our bodies alive for ever. The Jews knew that the day would come when they must die. But Jesus spoke of a “living bread,” which should last for ever. He said that whoever had this bread should not only have life for his soul, but that his body should be raised again to everlasting life. He told them that this bread came down from heaven—that it was given by His Father. Then He said—“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.”

The rulers and scribes who were present were startled at this. Did He mean that there could be no life that was true and lasting without Him—that not one of them could do without Him? Yes, that was what He meant. It offended them very much. They began to say, as the people of

Nazareth had done, "Is not this the son of Joseph? How can he say he came down from heaven?" Jesus knew all that they were thinking. He repeated what He had said—"He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." And He told them something more. It was not by becoming a King that He would give life. It was not merely by living amongst them, teaching and healing. He must give His life for them—He must die. His body must be killed, and His blood shed, that those who believed on Him might have life. And He spoke of the way in which His people should be joined to Himself as eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

Numbers of those who heard Him murmured again at what He said. They did not choose to understand Him. They did not like His speaking of such things. They had wanted to hear about a great kingdom, and not about life in their own souls. And even some of His disciples complained. They said, "This is hard; we cannot understand it." They were like those of whom I told you before when the Lord Jesus was at Jerusalem. They were not true to Him in their hearts. And that day many of them went away and left Him. How it must have grieved the loving Saviour! He turned to the twelve apostles, and said, "Will ye also go away?" They did not call His words hard. Though they did not understand everything, they believed Him, and loved Him with all their heart—all of them except one. This one said nothing. He did not go away. But Jesus knew what was in His heart, and it made Him very sorrowful.

Peter spoke for himself and the rest, and said—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

You will find this sermon which the Lord Jesus preached at Capernaum in the sixth chapter of St John's Gospel. I have told you only a little of it. But there is one thing more I ought to tell you. Jesus said that no one who came to Him should ever be sent away. His words were—"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."





CHAPTER XXIV.

JESUS AMONG THE GENTILES.

ST MATT. xv. ; xvi. 1-4. ST. MARK vii. ; viii. 1-26.

O you remember what good old Simeon said of the child Jesus when he took Him in his arms in the Temple? He called Him "a light to lighten the Gentiles." You know the Gentiles meant all foreigners—all who were not Jews.

Jesus spent nearly all His life among the Jews. The light came to them first, and they were to spread it among other nations. Yet many Gentiles must have seen Him and heard Him preach in Galilee. And I am now going to tell you of some days which He actually spent amongst Gentiles.

In Capernaum He had now many enemies. I told you how the chief men were offended at the words He had spoken in the synagogue; how the people murmured, and how some of the disciples forsook Him. This was not all. Scribes and Pharisees came all the way from Jerusalem to stir up the people against Him. The crowd had been disappointed because Jesus refused to let them make Him a King; and no doubt they were quite ready to listen to these wicked men.

But His time to suffer was not yet come. He had more work to do first. So He left Capernaum, and went a long way to the north till He came to the very borders of Palestine.

Beyond this there was a country called Phœnicia. It was a strip of land between the mountains of Lebanon and the sea. The people were great sailors. They made long voyages in their ships to sell the things made in their country. Their two chief towns were called Tyre and Sidon. Long years ago there had been a King of Tyre called Hiram, who was friendly with David, the great King of Israel, and with his son Solomon. The Prophet Elijah had once been sent by God to a town near Sidon. Yet the people of Phœnicia had remained heathens. They worshipped the sun and the moon, and their worship was sometimes very horrible.

I do not know whether the Lord Jesus went further than the borders of this country. We might think He would not have been known there. But some people from these very parts had already heard His words, and seen His wonders on the shore of the lake (St. Mark iii. 8 ; St. Luke vi. 17) ; and no doubt they had spoken of Him when they returned home. As He was walking with His disciples, a woman came and cried to Him for help. She had a little girl at home who was suffering, and she wanted Jesus to heal her. But Jesus did not answer her a word. He had never treated anyone who came to Him like this before. Yet she did not go away. She followed Him, until at last the disciples begged Him to give her what she asked, that she might leave them. Still He took no notice of her. She would not give up, but followed

Him into the house, saying, "Lord, help me!" Then He spoke to her, but He only said—"It is not meet (or proper) to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

What did He mean? The Jews were accustomed to call the Gentiles dogs, and they thought the Gentiles could not share in the good things which belonged to themselves. But why did Jesus say it? He knew what was in the woman's heart. He knew that she could trust Him. So He tried her faith, that it might become stronger, and be an example to others.

The woman was neither disheartened nor offended. She was quite willing to take the place of the dogs. "Truth, Lord," she said; "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Then Jesus said—"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And when she returned home full of joy, she found her child perfectly cured.

Jesus soon left this neighbourhood, and went to the further side of the Lake of Galilee, to a part of the Land of Palestine which was called Decapolis. It was almost the same as a heathen country, for most of the people living there were Gentiles. They had heard of the fame of Jesus. The man from Gergesa, out of whom Jesus had cast the evil spirits, had spoken everywhere of what He had done. So the people were all eager to see Him. When He saw the crowds gathering from all sides, He went up into a mountain, and sat there with His disciples. What a sight they had before them—an eager multitude below, all making their way to the spot where He was! There were blind people and lame

people led along by pitying neighbours ; there were others, still more helpless, carried on their mats, or in the arms of their friends ; and among those who seemed well and strong there were some who could not hear, and some who could not speak. All these sufferers were brought to Jesus, and one after another was healed.

There was one man whom Jesus took aside from the rest. He was deaf, and had something which prevented his speaking plainly. Jesus touched his ears, and then his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, the loving Saviour sighed. Why should He sigh when He was just to give that man the power to hear and speak ? We are not told what made Him sorrowful. Perhaps it was the thought of all the suffering in the world. But I think it was more likely the thought of the sin which caused that suffering. He must have remembered all the wickedness the ear listens to, and the bad things the tongue speaks. How we should pray that He would keep our tongues from evil, and make us care to listen only to what is good.

The multitude were full of wonder when they saw every sick one cured. These Gentiles glorified the God of Israel. And they said of the Lord Jesus—"He hath done all things well : He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." They stayed with Him three days, until the little food they may have brought with them was all gone, and they were beginning to want more. The Lord Jesus called His disciples, and told them He could not send the people away without food. Some of them, He said, had come from a long distance, and would faint with hunger on the way

home. You see He knew all about them, and He cared for them. He made them all sit down, like the five thousand whom He had fed before. There were four thousand here. The disciples had with them seven loaves and a few small fishes. After Jesus had blessed them, they were distributed among the people, and every one had enough. This time they filled seven baskets with the pieces that were left.

From the mountain where all this happened they could look over the Lake of Galilee. On the other side was the country where the Lord Jesus had spent so many of His days, where He had taught the most and healed the most. There was Capernaum, where He had stayed so often that it was called His own city; and Bethsaida, the birthplace of Peter, Andrew, and Philip, and many others. He would not go back there now, because of His enemies, but He crossed the water, and landed at another town further south, called Magdala.

But here He was met by the Pharisees, who were watching Him, and trying to find an opportunity to turn the people against Him, that they might do Him harm. They began to ask Him for a sign—something wonderful—to prove that He had come from God. You know they were determined not to believe in Him. They knew the miracles that He had done. The Lord saw what was in their hearts, the hardness, the deceit, the cruelty, and “He sighed deeply in His spirit.” Instead of remaining at Magdala, He entered the ship again with His disciples, and once more crossed over the lake.

They landed near the place where the five thousand had been fed. There was a city there called Bethsaida (not the

same as the other Bethsaida). Here a blind man was brought to Him to be healed. No doubt the people crowded round, hoping to see the miracle. But the Lord Jesus took the man by the hand and led him away from the crowd, out of the town. He wanted quiet and rest with His disciples, but He could spare time for this man. Think what a happiness to be led by the hand of Jesus! When they had got beyond the voice and confusion of the city, Jesus laid His hand on the man's eyes, and asked if he could see anything. He replied, "I see men, as trees, walking." He had just a glimmer of light, but could not make out what he saw. Jesus touched his eyes once more, and told him to look up. Where must his eyes have first fallen? On the face of the Healer! Then his sight was restored, and he saw every man clearly. How lovingly and patiently Jesus had cured him!

You have heard a good deal about the Lord Jesus healing sick and suffering people. Sometimes a whole crowd were healed, one after the other; sometimes one person all alone. Sometimes He healed with a touch; sometimes with a word. Sometimes He cured people at a distance; sometimes they came to Him; sometimes He went to them. Some were brought by friends, some came of themselves; some the Saviour healed without their asking. I think all this shows us how ready Jesus is to help every one; there can never be too many coming to Him; He notices each one, cares for each one, is loving and patient with each one, and always able to help and to save. We see how true were the words written about Him in the prophets—"Mighty to save."



CHAPTER XXV.

STRANGE NEWS AND A WONDERFUL SIGHT.

ST. MATT. xvi. 13-28 ; xvii. 1-9. ST. MARK viii. 27-38 ; ix. 1-10.

ST. LUKE ix. 18-36.

IF you were to climb one of the hills in Palestine, and look at the country spread out round you, you would be sure to see on one side a beautiful white peak rising above everything else. There is hardly a high place in the land where it cannot be seen. That white peak is the top of Mount Hermon, which is on the northern border of Palestine. Mount Hermon is mentioned very often in the Bible. David, who loved to write about the beautiful things God has made, speaks of it in the Psalms. The country round the foot of the mountain is very pretty ; full of streams, and groves, and corn-fields, and fruit-trees. There are vineyards up the slope, and fine trees, and plenty of singing-birds, and quantities of bright flowers everywhere. But what makes the peak such a pure and brilliant white ? That is the snow, which lies on the mountain all the year round.

At the foot of Hermon there are now the ruins of a city.

At the time when the Lord Jesus was on earth it was an important place. It was called Cæsarea Philippi. Just behind the town there is a high cliff, and below the cliff there is a great cave. From this cave a large stream of water flows out. It is one of the springs of the River Jordan.

After the Lord Jesus had cured the blind man at Bethsaida, He came with His disciples to this part of the country. He wanted quiet and leisure to talk to them, for He had something very important to tell them, something which would astonish and trouble them. But first He had a question to ask them—"Whom do men say that I am?" They answered that some thought He was one of the old prophets, who had risen from the dead; some even fancied He was John the Baptist. Then He asked what they themselves thought about it. Peter was eager to speak. He had no doubts; he was quite sure of what he said—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." In Capernaum the people had rejected the Lord Jesus: even some who were once disciples had forsaken Him. But this made no difference to Peter and his companions. It could not make them doubt. God had opened their hearts to see the truth. And Jesus said to Peter—"Blessed art thou, . . . for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

But He had another thing to tell them—a strange thing. They were ready to spread abroad the news that Jesus was the Messiah, but He bade them say nothing about it. Why was this? Because things were not going to be as they expected.

They thought that very soon others would believe as they did; Jesus would show everyone that He was Messiah; the people would receive Him joyfully; He would set up His kingdom in Jerusalem, and overcome all His enemies.

But they were wrong. He was not yet going to conquer His enemies, as they fancied. He was going to suffer many things, to be killed, and to rise again the third day.

They did not understand about rising again, but they knew what it meant to suffer and to be killed. It was too dreadful to think of! But how could such things happen to Messiah, the Son of God? They could not, would not believe it. Peter could not keep silence. He stretched out his hand to Jesus in the greatest excitement, and said—"Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not happen unto Thee!" And Jesus had to give him a sharp rebuke, for he was not acting like a disciple, but just like one of the crowd who only wanted a king.

Then Jesus told them, plainly and solemnly, what His disciples must expect. The way would not be smooth; they must not be grasping after the good things of this world, but be ready to deny themselves, and to follow where their Master went. But then, to encourage them, He spoke of the time when He would come again in glory. And, six days after, He gave a wonderful glimpse of His glory to three of them—Peter, James, and John.

You have heard before of the Lord Jesus going up into a mountain to pray. He would often go up in the evening, and spend the night in prayer instead of in sleep. He needed

the comfort of being alone with His Father more than He needed bodily rest. And just now He must have needed it very much. He had left the shores of the lake, where He had spent so many days in doing good. No eager crowd had followed Him. The people had been disappointed because He would not be made a king. Many had turned against Him. The Pharisees were watching Him, and wanting to kill Him. He had to look forward to unkindness, cruelty, suffering, death. He had told His disciples about it, but they could not enter into His thoughts. He was so truly a man, that He must have longed for some one to understand Him, and sympathise with Him. And there was no man who could do so. Now He was going to speak to His Father in heaven.

You can guess which mountain He went up—the high mountain with the glittering white peak—Mount Hermon. Towards sunset He must have taken the path which led up the slope from the town. Peter, James, and John were with Him.

But why did He take them? At other times He used to go alone. It was because He was not going for His own sake only. At the time when He most needed comfort Himself, He was caring for His disciples. He was going to give these three a sight of His glory that might be a strong comfort to them in the dark time that was coming.

I think you would be delighted if you could climb that mountain—to go through the vines and under the shady oak trees, to pick the flowers, and to look back over the rocks

and streams below. But I doubt whether the three disciples noticed that it was beautiful. The words of Jesus had sounded strange and sad, though they understood so little. And as they climbed higher up, and the night came on dark all round them, they got weary and drowsy. When Jesus stopped, they threw themselves on the ground, and were soon



fast asleep. They slept on for some time, while their Master was praying. Suddenly they woke up to a wonderful sight.

Three glorious figures were before them, the middle one by far the most glorious. The brilliant light all round them came from His face, which shone like the sun. His clothing

was pure, glittering white, like the snow above them. Yet they knew Him; it was Jesus, their Lord. It was the "Man of sorrows," but oh! how changed! The worn and weary look was no longer there. He was all beauty, glory, majesty, and love.

But who were the two shining beings on either side of Him? The disciples knew them too, though we are not told how. They were Moses and Elijah. Many hundred years had passed since they died. They had been at rest with God. And now God had sent them here to speak with Jesus.

What were they talking about? Not of the kingdom—not of Jesus triumphing over His enemies—not of all men believing on Him. They were talking of His death. Just the very thing the disciples had not liked to hear of! just the very thing that Peter had thought so dreadful!—Moses and Elijah, in all their brightness and blessedness, had come to speak about that! They had sympathy with the Lord Jesus. They knew that death was to be the way to the kingdom. They knew that those who believed in Jesus should be saved by that death. It was to that death that they owed all their blessedness, and all the glory they were looking for in the future. They were glad to speak of it. They spoke of it with love and gratitude. They spoke of it with wonder and adoration.

The disciples heard it. How astonished they must have been! But it was delightful to gaze upon the glorious face of their dear Lord. They could have looked for ever. Peter, as usual, was in a hurry to speak—"Master, it is good for us

to be here : and let us make three tabernacles ; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." In his wonder and rapture he hardly knew what he was saying. But he was so happy that he wanted it all to go on.

As he spoke, a bright cloud came over them all, shutting out everything else from view. It was so solemn, so wonderful, that they were filled with fear. Then a voice spoke out of the cloud—"This is My beloved Son : hear Him."

Who had heard that voice before ? John the Baptist, when our Lord was baptised. It was the voice of God the Father. The disciples fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. But the Lord Jesus came and touched them, and said—"Arise, and be not afraid."

And when they looked round, the glory had all disappeared ; Moses and Elijah were gone ; but Jesus was there—Jesus only with themselves, just as He had been before, though the brightness had hardly passed away from His face. That was enough for them. It was good to see the glory on the mount, but it was good to be anywhere with Him.

Jesus told them not to speak of what they had seen until He was risen from the dead. So they told no one. But they could never forget it. Long years afterwards, when Peter was an old man, and expecting soon to be called to die for Jesus' sake, and then to go home to Him, he wrote of the glory they had seen, and the voice from heaven which they had heard, when they were "with Him in the holy mount."
—2 Peter i. 16-18.



CHAPTER XXVI.

A LESSON OF TRUST.

ST. MATT. xvii. 14-21. ST. MARK ix. 14-29. ST. LUKE ix. 37-42.

WHILE the disciples were having that wonderful sight on the mount, there were two people in great trouble below. There was a poor boy who was tormented by an evil spirit. He could not hear what was said to him, and he could not speak to those about him, although now and then he would cry out suddenly like a madman. Sometimes he would fall on the ground as if in terrible agony, and then look as if he were dead. Sometimes he would fall into the fire, or into the water, and he would really have perished if no one had been near to help. The poor father was in despair. At last, when he heard that the disciples of Jesus were in the place, he brought the boy to them to see if they could help him.

He found them, most likely, on the road which led up to the mountain. There they would be watching for their Master's return. A crowd of people had followed him. Some, perhaps, were friends, who longed to see the poor child restored. Others would go out of curiosity, to see what

was done. And even here there were enemies of Jesus—scribes who were jealous of Him, and hated Him.

Could the disciples do anything? When Jesus had sent them out to preach, He had given them power to cure the sick, and to cast out devils. They had done these things in many towns and villages. They had gone in their Master's name, trusting His promise, and they had found it true. No doubt they were quite willing to receive this poor boy, and thought they could cure him. But they failed. The evil spirit would not go out at their bidding. I dare say they tried, one after another; but it was all of no use. Imagine the disappointment of the people, and the despair of the poor father! Think, too, how the scribes would triumph over them and taunt them, and even say scornful things against their Master.

Why were they not able to do it? Afterwards, when they were alone with Jesus, they asked Him the reason. He said, "Because of your unbelief." They had not been trusting in Him. They had not been willing to receive what He told them about His sufferings. They had not liked to give up their ideas about His kingdom. They had forgotten that He knew best. And so a little shadow of distrust had crept into their hearts. And when they were asked to do this hard thing—to cast the evil spirit out of the boy—they had no power to do it. For the followers of the Lord Jesus are only strong while they are trusting Him.

While all this was going on, the Lord Jesus was coming down the mountain with the three disciples. They had had

a glorious scene spread out before them when the sun rose. From Mount Hermon they could see all over the country—all the hills covered with vines, and the groves of trees, and the streams running through the valleys, and the white roofs of the towns peeping out here and there. They could look down upon the Lake of Galilee, and see the white sails upon it sparkling in the sunshine. But they had seen a glory and beauty far above all this. They could look forward to the time when *all* should see their Lord and His glory, and should worship Him. Only there was that dark shadow between—the death that was spoken of—and that strange word of His about rising again—what could it mean? As they walked down the mountain-side, their minds were full of these things.

But they were interrupted. The crowd saw Jesus coming in the distance, and they hastened to meet Him. He saw how downcast His disciples seemed, and noticed the scornful looks of the scribes who were talking to them, and He asked what was the matter. Then the poor father ran forward, and told the sad story of his boy's sufferings and his own disappointment. Jesus answered, "Bring him unto Me."

The child was brought forward. He was in a terrible condition, and the father said, despairingly, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us."

Could Jesus help? You know He is almighty—"able to save to the uttermost." Yet He cannot help any who do not trust Him. He said to the despairing father—"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

Then the father saw how wrong he had been, and he cried

out, with tears in his eyes—"Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief !" Was he trusting now ? Yes, for he asked Jesus to make Him trust. He would never have done that if he had not trusted Jesus at all.

Immediately Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out of the child. There was a terrible cry ; and presently the boy lay on the ground like one dead. But Jesus took his hand and lifted him up, and then gave him to his father—cured.

You see how good a thing it is to trust the Lord Jesus. We should remember the words written in the Psalms—"Trust in Him at all times."





CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

ST. JOHN vii. 2-46 ; viii. 12-59.

I MUST tell you of something which was going on in Jerusalem in the month of October. If you had been there about that time, you would have seen crowds pouring into the city from all parts, and everybody very busy. Everyone was out of doors. Those who lived in the place were on the roofs of their houses, putting up arbours or booths, made of the branches of trees, the palm, the olive, and the willow. Strangers who could find no room with their friends were building their booths in the streets. Even here there was not space enough, and so they were building them all round the city, and right up the Mount of Olives. What did all this mean ?

The Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. This was one of the three feasts which God had commanded the Israelites to keep every year. When all the corn had been reaped and stored away in the barns, and all the grapes picked off the vines, and all the figs and olives and pomegranates and dates from the trees, and everything gathered in, they were to have

this feast of thanksgiving. It lasted seven days, and during this time the people were to live in green booths, instead of in their houses. This was to keep them in mind of the years their fathers had spent in the wilderness living in tents, and of God's goodness in bringing them safely into the Land of Canaan, or Palestine. Therefore it was called the Feast of Tabernacles, which means tents or booths.

You would have liked to see the city of Jerusalem at such a time. It must have looked as if a forest had been planted in it. Beside the booths, you would have seen wreaths of green hanging across the street from house to house. And if you had looked across the valley to the Mount of Olives, you would have thought a new city had suddenly risen up there—only it was all green! Every morning the streets were full of people going to the Temple. They carried in their hands branches of trees with beautiful fruits. Many sacrifices were offered on the great altar of brass, and songs of praise were sung. There was a large court in the Temple, just in front of the great gate opposite the Mount of Olives. Here they placed two immense candlesticks, with four lamps on each, and these were lit every evening. The light shone out brightly on everything around.

But the best part of all was the drawing of water. I told you the Temple stood on a high hill. In the valley below there was a spring of clear, fresh water, which bubbled up out of the rock. It was called the Pool of Siloam. There was a flight of steps leading down the hill to this pool. Every day the priest went down these steps with a golden pitcher in his

hand. The other priests and the Levites (who had charge of many things in the Temple) stood on either side of the steps, in their white robes, with palm branches in their hands. The people, in their holiday dresses, crowded round everywhere to see. The priest dipped his pitcher in the pool and filled it with water. Then, as he carried it up the stairs to the Temple, to pour it into a silver basin before the altar, the whole assembly waved their branches, and sang joyful psalms. It was said that no one had ever seen rejoicing in his life who had not seen the drawing of water at the feast.

But were all those people really happy? There are often very sad hearts in crowds that look very gay; so we know there must have been some here too. Besides, they had been singing in the *Hallel* (so they called their psalms of praise) about Him who was to come in the name of the Lord. This meant the Messiah. They were still looking for Him. They were longing for a great King, who should set them free from the Romans. They had not found Him yet, and they were restless and dissatisfied. That water from the Pool of Siloam could not do them any good. I think it must have made some of them feel the want of something to refresh their souls.

There was One who could have refreshed them, and satisfied them, and given them real joy which would last, if they had only believed in Him. Many were talking about Jesus, for they expected to see Him at the feast, and He had not come. Where could He be? Even those who came from the side of the lake could give no tidings of Him. He had

not joined any of the companies of people who came up together to Jerusalem. They had not met Him or His disciples. Some spoke of His goodness; they would have been glad to see Him and to hear Him. But many of the great men spoke ill of Him, because they were jealous of the people liking Him.

Where was Jesus all this time? He had waited quietly till all the crowds had gone up to the feast. Then He set out with His disciples, taking the lonely paths instead of the public roads, and keeping away from the towns and villages. Why was this? Because He knew that enemies were watching for Him. But when He reached Jerusalem, He did not keep Himself hidden. He cared for those crowds, and knew how many aching hearts there were in the midst of all the brightness and gaiety. Suddenly He appeared in the Temple, and the people gathered round Him to listen to His teaching.

On the last day of the feast there was a solemn assembly for worship. But there was no drawing of water as on the other days. This had been done in remembrance of God's goodness in giving water to the Israelites in the wilderness. But it was also meant as a picture of greater blessings which God had promised. And perhaps it was left out on the last day to show that these blessings had not yet come: they were still looking for them. But when would they come? When would the thirsty souls be satisfied?

The Lord Jesus stood in the court of the Temple—perhaps close to the steps which led down to the spring—

and cried, so that all the vast assembly might hear—"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

What did this mean? It meant that He was the source of all life and happiness. He was the spring or fountain from which the living water would flow. But what was the water?

You have heard of it before. The Lord Jesus had spoken of it to the woman of Samaria. And He had given her a draught of that living water; for the Holy Spirit had opened her heart to believe in Him. The Holy Spirit is the living water. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit should come into the hearts of those who believed in Him, and should so fill them and satisfy them that they should be happy themselves and able to make others happy also. He said that out of them should flow rivers of living water. But this could not be yet. Jesus must first die for our sins, rise again, and go up to heaven; and then the Holy Spirit should be given abundantly.

When the feast was over, and, instead of the bright light that had streamed forth from the gates every evening, there was darkness over the Temple hill, the Lord Jesus said—"I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

In that journey through the wilderness God had gone before the Israelites in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. That was the sign of His presence. They never missed their way all through the long journey. When the bright lamps were lighted in the Temple court, the people must have thought of this. They had no longer such a sign

of God's presence. But Jesus spoke of something much better—of a light that should never pass away. None can miss their road, or walk in darkness, as long as they follow Him.

There are many other things which Jesus said, but I cannot tell you of them now. The people listened to Him eagerly, and some of them said, "This is the Prophet." Others even said, "This is the Christ," or Messiah. But His enemies were at hand. They contradicted and made objections. They wanted to take Him by force. The Pharisees and chief priests sent some men to do this. They came and stood among the crowd, watching their opportunity. But they went back again without Him. And when they were asked, angrily, "Why have ye not brought Him?" they answered, "Never man spake like this man."

At last His enemies got so enraged, that they took up some stones left lying about by the builders who were finishing part of the Temple, that they might stone Him! But suddenly He was not there. He had gone quietly away. The time was not yet come for Him to lay down His life. He had still some deeds of mercy to do, and words of mercy to speak, in the city of Jerusalem.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD FINDING THE SHEEP.

ST. JOHN ix. 1-38; x. 1-18.



It is a pretty sight to see a flock of sheep in a field ; much nicer than to see them driven along the road. I think you would like to see a flock of sheep in Palestine. In that country, and in other Eastern countries, the sheep are never driven. When the shepherd wants them, he gives a little call, and turns and walks on. Then the whole flock will follow him. He has taught them to know him, and he has a name for each one, just as people in England have names for their favourite horses or cows. Each sheep knows his name, and is fond of his shepherd. If a sheep has strayed away and got lost, the shepherd will walk miles and miles to find it. He will not mind if the night is dark or the way rough, if he can only bring it home safe. He will go through many dangers to save it.

I told you once of the Lord Jesus looking upon a great crowd of people, and how very sorry He felt for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. I think He must have felt just the same when He looked at the multitude

gathered together for the Feast of Tabernacles. The priests and scribes ought to have been their shepherds, and ought to have led them in the right way. But they were false shepherds. They did not care to do the people good. They tried to drive them with strict and harsh rules, and often they led them the wrong way.

One day, when the Lord Jesus was teaching in the Temple, He spoke of One whom He called the Shepherd of the sheep. He said of this Shepherd—"He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. . . . He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him : for they know His voice."

You can tell who this Shepherd is ; it is Jesus Himself. He knows every one of His sheep, and cares for every one. And He never drives them anywhere. Wherever He wants them to go, He always goes before them.

The Shepherd had come into danger for the sake of His sheep. He had come to Jerusalem, right into the midst of His enemies. And He was going to do more than that—He was going to die for them. So He said—"I am the good Shepherd : the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. I lay down my life for the sheep." Must not the sheep love such a Shepherd ?

I am going to tell you of a stray sheep whom He had just sought and found.

It was the same day that the enemies of the Lord Jesus had tried to stone Him. You remember that He disappeared from them, and went quietly out of the Temple. No doubt

the disciples were anxious for Him to get away as quickly as possible. But as He passed along, He saw a sight which made Him stop. There was a poor blind man sitting by the roadside begging: It is very sad to see anyone beg; but I dare say this man had no means of working for his living. In those days the blind were not cared for as they now are. A blind child may now be taught to do many useful things, and earn his own living when he grows older. This man was blind from his birth. He had never seen the sunshine, the sky, nor even the faces of his own father and mother. And he knew nothing of the Lord Jesus; he seems hardly to have heard of Him. Although Jesus was Himself in danger, He would stop to help this man. The good Shepherd would not pass by His stray sheep. He said to His disciples—"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Then He made some clay and spread it upon the eyes of the blind beggar, and said to him—"Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam."

Though he could still see nothing, the man trusted in Jesus, and obeyed Him. He groped his way to the pool, which I think was not far off; then he stooped down and bathed his eyes with the cool water. Think how he must have felt when he opened them. There before him was the flight of steps leading up the steep hill; above was the Temple in all its splendour; and over everything the blue sky and the bright sunshine; and he could see it all! He was happier, far happier, than the gay crowd who had assembled there day after day to see the water drawn. I think he must have felt almost bewildered with all the

brightness and beauty. He would want most of all to see the One who had healed him. But Jesus was gone from the place where he had left Him. Then, I suppose, he hastened home to his parents, to look for the first time upon their faces.

The neighbours saw him pass, and stared at him with astonishment. "Is not this he," they said, "that sat and begged?" Some thought it must be another man very like him; but he said, "I am he," and told them how he had been healed. The news soon spread, and before long the Pharisees heard of it. They called for the man to appear before them, and tell them all about it, and they blamed the good Physician because He had healed this poor sufferer on the Sabbath-day! They sent for the parents, and asked them about it. The parents were afraid of getting into trouble, for they saw that the Pharisees were very angry. They said their son had indeed been born blind, but they knew nothing about his cure, and he could tell of it best himself. Then the Pharisees wanted the man to join with them in speaking against the Lord Jesus! But he would not do such a thing. He spoke out so boldly for his Deliverer, that at last they condemned him to be put out of the synagogue. This meant that he was not to be allowed to join in the worship of the synagogue, and was looked upon as an outcast and a heathen. The great Council at Jerusalem decided that every man who dared to say Jesus was the Messiah should be punished in this way.

This Council consisted of seventy of the principal men, and was called the Sanhedrim. There was one man belonging

to it who did believe in Jesus. You have heard of him before; it was Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night. He had once tried to speak for Him.—St. John vii. 50–52. But when the rest of the Council answered scornfully, he was afraid. He dared not confess that he believed Jesus to be the Messiah. I dare say that after this he kept away from the Council, that he might not have to join in the wrong things they did.

Which do you think was the happiest, Nicodemus or the man who had just been cast out of the synagogue? The one dared not do what he knew to be right; the other had done it boldly. Yet this poor man knew very little about Jesus.

Did Jesus leave him in ignorance? No; Jesus knew that he would be a true disciple. The Saviour who had found the lost sheep was willing to trust him with a very precious thing—the knowledge of Himself. The apostles had been forbidden to say to anyone that their Lord was the Messiah; but Jesus was going to tell this man even more.

The good Shepherd went again to find His sheep. Was it not worth being cast out by men, to be sought by the Lord Jesus? When He had found him, He asked, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” The man replied, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” The answer was, “Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.” Then the man said, “Lord, I believe.” Not even the apostles, who had been so long with Jesus, could say more than that. Jesus had indeed trusted him with a precious thing—the knowledge of the Son of God. And then, in wonder, and joy, and love, and gratitude, he worshipped Him.



CHAPTER XXIX.

WHO IS THE GREATEST?

ST. MATT. xviii. 1-5, 10-14. ST. MARK ix. 33-37.



THE Lord Jesus had told His disciples very plainly what He was looking forward to—that He would be ill-treated, would have to suffer and to die. But they did not like to think of such things. They still hoped that He would soon be acknowledged as Messiah and King. Though they had seen Him in danger at the Feast of Tabernacles, they went on hoping. And their minds were so full of the thoughts of the kingdom, that on their way back to Galilee they began to think which of them would be the greatest in it. Each one wanted the highest place, and I dare say each one had some reason why he should be put first, before all the others. Of course they could not agree, and there was a dispute.

When they got to Capernaum, they would probably go at once to the house where Peter's family were living. How glad everyone there would be to see Jesus again. As soon as they were left quiet, Jesus called His disciples. "What was it," He said, "that ye disputed among yourselves by the

way?" They were ashamed to answer, for they knew that the things they had been saying would not please their Master. But He knew all they had said, and all they had thought. It must have grieved Him to see them thinking so much of themselves. They had not only forgotten what He had told them about His death; they had forgotten what He said about those who should be in the kingdom. Do you remember what it was?—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Perhaps they noticed His sorrowful look, and felt uneasy. Then they thought they would ask Him who should really be the greatest. He answered them—"If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." Did Jesus really mean that the greatest would work the hardest, and would think the least of himself? It sounded strange to them. But He made it still plainer.

He called a little child; we are not told who it was—perhaps Peter's own little son. I think it must have been a child who lived in that house, and I can fancy how the little one may have run to meet the Lord Jesus when He arrived, and have gone back to his play afterwards all the happier because Jesus was in the house. The child came directly he was called. He did not know why he was wanted, and did not ask. I think he must have been an obedient little boy. The Lord Jesus took him tenderly in His arms, and said—"Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

No doubt the disciples understood that. The child was

not thinking of being great. He was quite content to be the youngest and the last, and to go where he was told, and come when he was called. If anything were wanted, and he could fetch it, he would not think himself too big or too grand to do so. He would be delighted to be able to help anybody. Jesus wished His disciples to be like that—always humble,



always unselfish, always ready, always willing. That was the way to be really useful, to be really great, to be like Him. He wanted them to be as careful to do little acts of kindness as to do things that seemed great. The twelve apostles had worked miracles in His name. There was something else

they might do which would please Him just as much—"Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth Me." He told them, too, how precious the little children were in the sight of His Father in heaven.

Jesus cares for the little children now as much as ever He did then. But I wonder how many there are who please Him as that little one did in Capernaum ! There are so many now who forget that they are children ; who are not lowly, and not obedient ; who think they ought to be first, even before older people ; who will not take the trouble to help anybody, but always want to be waited on themselves. It is very sad to see such un-childlike children ! Not only the grown-up people, but the little ones, too, should remember what Jesus said about the greatest—that he should be "last of all, and servant of all."





CHAPTER XXX.

A PARTING AND A JOURNEY.

ST. LUKE ix. 51-56; x. 1-24; xvii. 11-19.

DO you like saying good-bye? Most people feel a little sad when they are leaving a place where they have spent many happy days. Still it is not all sad. It is nice to have friends wishing you a pleasant journey, and hoping to see you again by-and-by. And perhaps you are looking forward to something pleasant at the end of the journey. And no journey ever need be sad if you have your best Friend with you—if you are trusting in the Lord Jesus—for He is always near those that trust Him.

I am going to tell you of a journey that He made. There were many sorrowful things about it, for He was willing to bear sorrow that we might have joy.

He was going to leave Capernaum, the city where He had spent so many days since He began His work of teaching and healing, not just for a short time, but altogether. He would no more preach in the synagogue, or by the side of the lake, where His voice had been heard so often. He would no more go from town to town and from village to village in the

country round about. He was going away from Galilee, and His heart must have been very sorrowful. I will tell you why.

Would it not hurt you, if somebody whom you were trying to help were to turn round and treat you unkindly? That is just what the people of Capernaum and the other cities on the lake were doing. The Lord Jesus had gone about among them, healing the sick, bringing good tidings to those who would listen, day after day teaching them so lovingly and so patiently. And they had turned against Him. They would not believe His message. They listened to those who spoke against Him. They would not have Him for their Saviour. They had rejected Him.

He must have felt their unkindness and their ingratitude very deeply. But it grieved Him still more to think what they were losing. If you brought a sick person some medicine to make him well again, would you not be very sorry if he refused to take it? Jesus had come as the good Physician to cure sick souls, and He knew how terrible it was for them to refuse Him. He knew the ruin they were bringing on themselves when they would not let Him save them. And when He thought of all this, He spoke some of the saddest words that ever fell from His lips.—St. Luke x. 13-15.

And where was He going? Not to some pleasant spot where the people would believe Him and follow Him—not yet back to His home in heaven—not yet back to the glory He had left for our sakes. The time was drawing near for Him to die. He had a few more months of work before Him;

once more He would go up to one of the feasts at Jerusalem, and give His message to the crowds who were gathered together; and then He would go there to suffer and to be put to death. Think what He had to look forward to!

And yet He did not shrink from it. We can never know all the pain that He had to bear; but He had long looked forward to it. How glad we are to get out of the way of anything that is painful! But Jesus went forward to meet it. "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

But why should He suffer? He was the Son of God; all things obeyed Him; His enemies could have no power over Him unless He allowed it. Why should He allow it? You know it was for our sakes. The Bible tells us He bore it all "for the joy set before Him." And what do you think that joy was? It was not the joy of going back to heaven. That He could have without dying. It was the joy of saving us. Although so few believed in Him then, He looked forward to the time when thousands and thousands should be drawn to Him, should be washed in His blood from all their sins, and should share His glory and His blessedness. He is now having this joy over those that come to Him day by day. Will He have it over you?

But I must now tell you about His setting off. When He went up to the Feast of Tabernacles some time before, He had gone privately. No one knew of His taking the journey, and few knew where He was till He suddenly appeared in the Temple. But it was different now. He left Capernaum openly with His disciples. Formerly great crowds had

followed Him wherever He went, but now none but His disciples cared to go with Him. I wonder if they missed Him after He was gone! I wonder if they sometimes went down to the shore, and remembered how they had stood there to hear Him speak from the boat; I wonder whether they called to mind any of His gracious words!

Other people were now, for a short time, to have the opportunity which the Galileans had lost. Jesus was going to travel slowly, preaching as He went, that before His work was finished many more might hear His gracious message. He sent messengers on before Him, that people might know He was coming, and be ready to receive Him.

He started to go to Jerusalem the straight way, through the country of the Samaritans. You have heard of His going that way before (chap. x.), when He was travelling from Jerusalem into Galilee. I dare say you remember how He talked with the Samaritan woman at the well, and how gladly the people welcomed Him, and persuaded Him to stay two days at the town of Sychar. Many others must have heard about Him since then. But when His messengers reached the first Samaritan village on the road, and told the people He was coming, they refused to receive Him. They would have nothing to do with Him, because He was going to Jerusalem. Two of the disciples, James and John, were very angry at their Master being treated like this, and they wanted to punish the people. Jesus blamed them for thinking of such a thing, and said—"The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." But He would not

stay where they were unwilling to have Him. The Samaritans lost the blessing they might have got. They had thrown away their opportunity. Jesus turned away from them, and went on by another road, along the borders of the country.

As He was travelling along this road, a sad cry reached His ear—"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Whom did it come from? Ten wretched men were standing afar off, with their eyes eagerly turned towards Him. They dared not come near, for they were lepers. But they would not lose their opportunity, so they lifted up their voices, and cried to the good Physician. Jesus answered—"Go, show yourselves unto the priests." What did He mean? A man with the disease of leprosy might not come near anyone, except those who were lepers like himself. But you remember what a leper had to do when he was cured (chap. xv.). He must bring his offering, and get the priest to pronounce him clean, before he could go home to his friends. So the words really meant that Jesus had done what they asked Him. They were so sure of this that they obeyed Him at once. And as they were going to the priests, they felt that they were cured.

But while nine of them went on their way, one turned back. I think you can guess why. Once more this man lifted up his voice. But it was no piteous cry for help which came from his lips. With a loud voice he glorified God. And then, hasting to the feet of Jesus, he fell down before Him and thanked Him. The man was a Samaritan, yet he was the only one who showed any gratitude. Jesus said—"Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

Who would wish to be like those nine ungrateful men? Yet how often we forget to thank the Lord Jesus for all His goodness to us! Remember that He cares about it, and that "it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord."—Ps. xcii. 1.

It is pleasant to tell you of one man who was truly grateful to the Lord Jesus. And I must now tell you of another great joy that He had, in the midst of His labours and His sufferings.

When He started from Galilee, He chose seventy of His disciples, and sent them out to preach, as He had sent the twelve apostles some time before. They had gone out two and two together, and had visited the cities and villages which lay on His road. They had, of course, met with many people who were hard and unbelieving. But their message had been received by some of the poor, the young, and the simple. They had healed sick people, and had cast out devils in their Master's name, and they were overjoyed that they had been able to do this. But their Lord rejoiced rather over the souls that had received His word. After He had given thanks to His Father, He turned to His disciples and said—"Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." For there is nothing more truly joyful than to see the work of the Lord Jesus prospering, and souls coming to Him to be saved.



CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SINNER'S FRIEND.

ST. MATT. xix. 1, 2. ST. MARK x. 1. ST. LUKE xiv. 1-25; xv. ;
xviii. 9-14.

FTER the Lord Jesus had passed the borders of Samaria, He crossed the River Jordan into the country beyond. This part of Palestine was then called *Peræa*. It was a beautiful country, full of green hills covered with fine trees, and streams of water coming down from the hills into the River Jordan. In the old Testament it is called *Gilead*. We do not read so much about it in the Bible as we do about the other parts of Palestine.

I do not think the Lord Jesus had ever preached and taught here, though he may have passed through the country. But no doubt many of the people had seen Him before. Some must have been in Jerusalem when He was teaching there. And some who heard of the wonderful things He did had travelled to Galilee to see Him from beyond Jordan.—St. Mark iii. 8. Crowds of people now followed Him, as they used to do in Galilee. We read of the multitude being so

great that the people trod one upon another.—St. Luke xii. 1. But there were proud and scornful Pharisees here too.

I told you before how Jesus began to teach the people on the shore of the lake by *parables*—that is, stories with a meaning. It was at this time that He told some of the most beautiful of all His parables. One day He was asked to a feast given by one of the chief Pharisees. He was grieved at what He saw there. The guests all wanted the best place, and were trying each one to get before the other. And these guests were all rich people, who could ask the Pharisee again to a feast as costly as his own. There was no real kindness among them. All were thinking of their own pleasure or their own greatness. Jesus told them a story of a very different feast—of a man who made a great supper, and gathered together the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, and who had still room for more. Can you guess what this parable meant?

I told you how angry the Pharisees in Galilee had been because Jesus allowed the publicans and sinners to come to Him, and even went to a feast with them. The same thing happened here. The publicans and sinners were glad to hear the gracious words He spoke. Other people looked down upon them, and did not like to come near them. And so, even if they wished to lead better lives, they felt discouraged. They would think, "It is of no use trying; we may as well go on in our old ways, for nobody will help us; nobody cares for us."

But when they heard the words of the Lord Jesus, they

felt that there was One who did care for them. When they drew near unto Him, He did not turn away with a scornful look. He spoke gently and pitifully to them. He was their Friend. He was willing to go to their houses, and to eat and drink with them, that He might do them good.

The Pharisees and scribes could not bear to see this. They complained, and said, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." What they said was quite true. And why did Jesus go among these sinners?

When Jesus came into the world, He came to sinners, for "all have sinned." The Pharisees were sinners like those whom they despised, though their conduct looked more respectable in the eyes of men. There would be no hope for any of us if Jesus were not the sinner's Friend.

He told these Pharisees the reason why He did it. And He told it in three beautiful parables, which you will find in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke.

It was because these sinners were *lost*. They were very far away from God, and they did not know how to get back. And more than that, they had no power of themselves to get back. They must be found, and they must be helped.

But were they worth seeking and helping? Yes; Jesus said they were very precious. If a man loses some of his property, what pains he will often take to get it back. And how much more if one of his children gets lost! He will go out at once—he will go any distance—he will never rest till he finds the lost one.

And God's love is far beyond this. He so loved lost

sinner as to give His Son to die for them. You can imagine what joy there would be in a house when the lost child was found again. And Jesus said—"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

You see what is meant by a lost sinner being found. It



is that his heart is changed ; that he repents, and turns to his Father in heaven. And oh, what a joyful thing it is to know that the Father receives him with tender love !

Another time the Lord Jesus told a parable which will help you to understand this. I will tell you this story. It was about two men who went up to the Temple to pray.

One of these was a Pharisee; the other was a publican. What do you think they wanted?

The Pharisee did not seem to want anything. He went up to the Temple because it was the right thing. He professed to be very pious, so of course he must go there and pray. He looked very well satisfied with himself. He held



up his head, and walked forward to a front place, where he could be seen by every one. He had noticed the publican as he went by, and passed him, no doubt, with a scornful look. The publican would not come forward. He felt that he was not worthy. He stood afar off. And, instead of holding up his head and staring about him, he kept his eyes on the

ground, for he was very sorrowful. He had come there because there was something he wanted very much, and he had come to ask God for it.

Right in front of these men was the great altar, where the sacrifices were offered up. I have told you before about these sacrifices. They were to show that the sinner deserved death, but that God would let another die instead of him. You know who this other was—the Lord Jesus Himself. But the Jews did not yet know this. There was a lamb offered as a sacrifice every morning, and another every evening, and the smoke was always going up from the altar. It was strange that those who came to pray should forget that they were sinners.

The Pharisee quite forgot it. He thought himself very good. And these were some of the words he said—"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, . . . or even as this publican." He went on to speak of his good deeds (as he thought); of his fasting twice every week, and giving a great deal of money for the service of God. You see he was full of himself, and his prayer was nothing but boasting. How different from the prayer that Jesus gave us—the Lord's Prayer! He had taken a front place in the Temple, but he was really far off from God. And the worst was, that he did not know it.

The publican was very different. He knew, and he felt, that he was a sinner. He longed to be forgiven, to have the burden of his guilt rolled away, that he might begin a new life and serve God. His heart was sad because of his sin.

He was standing afar off; but was he really far away from God? Why, he was longing after God; he was hating the sin that had kept him at a distance; he had come to ask forgiveness, and he was trusting God to forgive him. This was his prayer—a very short one—“God be merciful to me, a sinner.” Do you not see that he had been lost, and now he was found?

He went down to his house with a heart at peace, for he knew God heard him. He was *justified*—that means his sins were not reckoned to him any longer; he was *exalted*—that is, lifted up and brought near to God. Does not this story bring good news to sinners?

I am sorry to say there are people like the Pharisee in the world now—men and women, and even children, who think they are quite good enough. But remember who it is that Jesus receives; He is the *sinner's* Friend. As He told His disciples—“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”





CHAPTER XXXII.

A HOME WHERE JESUS WAS WELCOMED.

ST. LUKE x. 38-42. ST. JOHN x. 22-40.



HAVE told you already about the Mount of Olives, or Olivet—the hill close to Jerusalem, just opposite the hill on which the Temple stood, with the valley of the Kedron flowing between the two. If you were to go up Mount Olivet, and then down again on the other side, you would come to a village called Bethany. It is a small place, and the houses are now very poor and wretched. But at a distance it must look pretty, nestling among the trees at the foot of the hill. At the time I am writing about, it was no doubt a much pleasanter place. There were beautiful palm trees growing round it, which must have borne plenty of fruit, for Bethany means “house of dates.”

There was a house in Bethany where three people were living. They seem to have been well off, and I dare say the house was very comfortable. There were two sisters named Martha and Mary, and their brother was called Lazarus. The house seems to have belonged to Martha. They must have been a very happy family, for they loved the Lord

Jesus, and He loved them. When He was in the neighbourhood He used to stay in their house. They always had a warm welcome for Him. Martha would do her best to wait upon Him, and Mary loved to listen to His teaching. She would sit hour after hour at His feet, drinking in His words.

I told you that the Lord Jesus was coming up to a feast



at Jerusalem. He had come slowly from Galilee, and had spent a little time in Peræa, on the other side of the Jordan. Then He crossed the river again, and came up the road that leads from Jericho to Jerusalem. It is uphill all the way, and very steep. In some places the path is like a flight of steps, only the steps are of hard rock, and very rough and

crooked. Robbers often hide behind the rocks on either side of the narrow path, so that it is a dangerous road. When travellers from England go that way now, they generally take a strong guard, and pay a great deal of money. One of our Lord's parables was about a man who was attacked by robbers on this road, and badly wounded; and about a traveller passing by who took care of him. It is called the parable of the good Samaritan.—St. Luke x. 30–37.

After this dangerous and tiring journey, it must have been very pleasant to see the white roofs in Bethany peeping out among the trees. There the Lord Jesus could enjoy a quiet rest. How delighted Martha and Mary and Lazarus must have been when He arrived! They would get Him water for His weary feet, and oil to refresh Him. Martha then hastened to get ready the evening meal. She was not satisfied to lay the table just as she was accustomed to do every day. Now that He was come, she wanted to have something much better than usual. She tried to do her best, and she hurried to and fro, and worked as hard as she could.

All this time Mary was in her favourite place, at the feet of Jesus, listening while He talked. Martha was getting fretted and worried over her work, and thought it hard she should be left to do everything by herself. At last she actually went and complained—"Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." But Martha was wrong. All the work she was doing was not necessary. A simple meal would have been quite enough. And the Lord Jesus was sorry to see her "careful

and troubled about many things." He said to her—"One thing is needful." And what was that one thing? Just the thing Mary had chosen. She wanted to know more of Jesus; to be with Him; to have His words in her heart; to lose none of them. She felt that she needed this. It was the one thing needful for her.

But Martha had been thinking about her Lord's comfort



and pleasure. Was that not right? Was it not needful? She meant right, but she had made a mistake. What Jesus cared most about was that His disciples and friends should know Him, and get all the blessings He had to give. If you spent your money in buying a present for some friend, how would you feel if your friend were too busy to take it, or to look at

it? You would be much disappointed. It is sad to think how often the friends of the Lord Jesus disappoint Him. He is pleased when we care to be with Him, to speak to Him, and to hear His word. That is the "one thing needful."

I do not know whether Mary felt troubled when she heard her sister complaining. But she must have been glad to hear the Lord Jesus say—"Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her."

I must tell you about the feast which was to take place at Jerusalem. It was not one of those commanded by the law of Moses. And it was held in the winter, very near the time when we keep Christmas. So the city was not so crowded with people from a distance. Still it was a feast which the Jews cared about, and they kept it with great rejoicings. Many years before the Emperor of Rome conquered their country, they had been subject to another heathen king, who had taken possession of their Temple. But a brave man had come forward and driven out the heathen soldiers, and the Jews had become free again. Then they once more dedicated the Temple to the worship of God. And in remembrance of that day they kept the "Feast of the Dedication."

The Lord Jesus went up from Bethany to this feast. I will tell you how He was received at Jerusalem.

The Jews were longing for a deliverer. In the midst of their rejoicings they were restless. They could not forget that the Romans ruled over them. They were not a free people. Only a few steps from the walls of the Temple stood

a fortress, where there was a guard of Roman soldiers. And they were looking for Messiah, the King, to set them free, and make them a great people. If Jesus were ready to do this, they would believe on Him at once. You see they wanted a Messiah to suit their own wishes.

They came round the Lord Jesus as He was walking in Solomon's Porch—a splendid porch or colonnade all along the eastern side of the Temple, looking over the Mount of Olives. They did not want to learn from Him. They did not want to follow Him. But they asked—"If thou be the Christ (that is, Messiah), tell us plainly."

Now you know that Jesus was not the kind of deliverer they were wishing for. The true Messiah was the Son of God, who had come to do His Father's work. And He had not come to be a great warrior or an earthly king, but to give eternal life to those who believed in Him.

The Jews were furious because He would not be the King they wished for, and because He claimed to be the Son of God. "He speaks blasphemy," they said; and they seized some of the stones that lay around to stone Him. But He stood still, and answered them calmly and quietly. And they dared not touch Him. His time was not come yet, and He passed away out of the Temple and left Jerusalem. I dare say he stopped at Bethany to bid farewell for a little time to His friends there. Then He took His journey down the steep hills into the Jordan valley, and crossed the river into Peræa again.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

LITTLE CHILDREN.

ST. MATT. xix. 13-15 ; ST. MARK x. 13-16 ; ST. LUKE xviii. 15-17.



I HAVE told you about many sick people being brought to the Lord Jesus. I have told you how He gave sight to the blind and power to the helpless. And you have heard, too, of the sinful and the sorrowful coming to Him. You know how He healed the broken-hearted, and satisfied the restless and hungry souls. I am now going to tell you about some who were not blind, or lame, or sick ; who were not restless, and not sorrowful ; who had never felt that their sin was a heavy burden ; who were not longing to be comforted, or longing to be taught. And yet they came to Jesus, and they got a blessing.

It happened when He was in Peræa for the last time, just before He was leaving.—St. Matt. xix. 15. He had been staying in a part of the country where John the Baptist had once preached. The people there had not forgotten John's preaching ; they remembered what he told them about the Messiah. And when the Lord Jesus came among them,

crowds went to hear Him, and a great many believed.—St. John x. 40–42.

Among these there were some women who had little children at home. As they listened to the gracious words of the Lord Jesus, they saw that He was not only a wonderful Teacher and a mighty Healer: they saw that He was a tender Saviour and a loving Friend. They wanted their children to see Him too. His words were often so plain that even a little child could understand them. And even if some were too young to understand, they would like to hear that voice, and to see Him smile upon them. And the youngest of all—the tiny babies—they must not be left out. “Never mind,” the mothers would think, “if they are too young to know anything about it; Jesus can bless them for all that; we will ask Him to lay His hands upon them; they will be glad to hear of it when they are grown older.” So they went to fetch the children.

What child does not like to go out with mother? I can fancy how they would jump up from their play, and take her hand, or hold on to her dress; and how the tiny ones would like to be folded in her arms. I dare say she would say—“We are going to see Jesus, the Messiah; you will like to see Him!” And perhaps some of them would repeat, “We are going to see Jesus!” And some would know nothing at all of where they were going; but that would not matter.

No doubt there were many people round the Lord Jesus when they arrived; but the mothers would get through. I should think the people would make way for them to pass

And with eager, joyful faces, they would hasten forward to get to the Master, when they were suddenly stopped. Who would stop them? It was the disciples. They were vexed that a lot of children should be brought there. They thought their Master ought not to be troubled with such little ones. There was but a short time left, and so many people wanted to hear Him!

The mothers were not willing to be turned away. I dare say they would have begged hard to be allowed to go, if but for a few moments. But there was no need for them to do so. The Lord Jesus had seen all that was going on.

It is very seldom that we read of Jesus being angry. I have told you before that nothing but what was wrong ever made Him angry. But when He saw what the disciples were doing, He was "much displeased." And then He said those beautiful words—"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

Then they might come, and no one should hinder them. And not only might they just get a sight of Jesus, but they might be in His kingdom, just as much as the older people! No doubt the disciples were surprised when they heard that. I am afraid that even now some people can hardly understand it. But Jesus said it. Not only those who were old enough to know a little about it, but the infants who could know nothing. Was not that good news?

You can fancy how happy the mothers looked now, as they held out their little ones for the gracious Master to

touch. But He did more than that. He took them up in His arms. People often take a child up in their arms because they feel kindly towards it at the time. But perhaps they may never see it again, and very likely they may think no more of it. It was not so with the Lord Jesus. Whatever He did He meant, not only at the moment, but altogether.



And I am sure that when He took those children in His arms He meant—"I love them ; I will never forget them ; they are Mine."

And that was not all. He laid His hands upon them. It is very pleasant to have a kind, gentle hand laid upon you. But the touch of Jesus was something more than that ; His hands were full of healing. But these little ones were not

sick ; what healing did they need ? However bright and sweet they may have looked, they had sin in their hearts—even the youngest of them. Every little baby is born with a sinful heart. But Jesus came to save His people from their sins. And when He put His hands on those little ones, I think He meant that He numbered them among His saved people ; that He would give them His Holy Spirit, and make them fit for His home above.

And then He blessed them. They did not ask His blessing ; they did not know they needed it. He gave it to them out of His free love and mercy. How happy for them to get His blessing before they ever knew the curse of sin ; to be folded in His arms before they ever knew what it was to go astray like a sheep that is lost !

Do not think you cannot go to Jesus unless you feel you have been very wicked. Do not think you need not go because you feel very happy. It does not matter what you feel. But if you do come to Him, He is sure to bless you. You remember how the hymn says—

“ Yet still to His footstool in prayer I may go.”

And none are so happy as those who have been with Him all their lives—ever since they were little children.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS IN SORROW.

ST. MATT. xix. 16-22; ST. MARK x. 17-27; ST. LUKE xviii. 18-25;
ST. JOHN xi. 1-44.

HAVE told you about the last thing the Lord Jesus did before He left Peræa. After He had already set out on the road leading down to the fords of Jordan—that is, the place where the river might be crossed—a young man came running after Him. He had an important question to ask the great Teacher, and he had nearly lost his opportunity. He knelt down before Jesus and asked, “What good thing must I do, that I may have eternal life?”

The man was a “ruler,” so he must have been taught and respected. He knew the law of Moses, and he thought he had kept all God’s commandments. Yet you see he was uneasy in his mind. There was a little voice in his heart which said—“It is not all right with you; God’s commandments are wider than you think; you have not done enough to deserve “eternal life.” So he asked Jesus again—“What lack I yet?” (or, what is there wanting in me?).

Now there is not one of us who has kept all God’s com-

mandments perfectly; therefore not one of us can ever deserve eternal life. You know how it is to be got—by believing on Jesus, for Jesus is *the Life*. Those who believe on Jesus are ready to give up everything to follow Him. Was this young man ready? There was one thing keeping him back.

Jesus answered him—"Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me."

When the young man heard this, "he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich." He loved his riches too well. He went away, and we are not told of his ever coming to Jesus again.

Jesus was leaving Peræa to go to a family in great trouble.

A message had come to him from Bethany—"Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick."

It was Lazarus who had been laid on a sick-bed. You can think how tenderly Martha and Mary nursed their dear brother, and how anxiously they watched him. When they saw how very ill he was, they sent to tell the Lord Jesus. You remember why Jesus had gone away across the Jordan. It was because the great men at Jerusalem wanted to kill Him. So it would be dangerous for Him to come back to Bethany, which was only two miles from the city. But the sisters felt sure He would not leave them alone in their sorrow. He would find some way of helping them. You know He might have cured Lazarus at once, without making a journey at all. But He did not do so. He stayed quietly where He was for two days longer.

Do you think this very strange ? We cannot expect to understand all that Jesus does now. Things will puzzle us sometimes ; but He will make them clear one day. He said once to one of His disciples who was puzzled—"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

No doubt Martha and Mary felt very much puzzled. How eagerly they must have asked the messenger when he came back, "What did the Master say ?" But the messenger had little to tell them. Jesus had said nothing about coming, and nothing about healing Lazarus. These were His words—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

"Not unto death !" Then surely their dear brother would get well again ! But as they watched by his bedside he grew worse and worse. How still they must have sat, listening for the least sound, hoping Jesus might come ; for they trusted His love. Perhaps one of them would run up on the roof, to look if she could see Him in the distance. But they looked in vain, and they listened in vain. In a few short hours their brother lay dead.

It was a terrible loss to both of them. But I think it was worst for Mary. Martha seems to have been the eldest of the three, and I dare say Mary and Lazarus were near the same age, and had been companions to one another ever since they were little children. The funeral must have taken place at once, for in those countries the dead are buried as soon as possible. So the body of him they loved so dearly was wrapped in linen and laid in a cave in the rock. The

opening of the cave was then closed up with a great stone, and all was over.

Oh, how mournful they lay down that night, and with what desolate hearts they rose again the next morning! How wide and empty the world seemed now that their brother was gone! The neighbours were very sorry for them; friends came from the city to try and comfort them, but what comfort could they bring?

Yet who was really the best off—Martha and Mary in their sorrow, or that young ruler who had gone home to his lands and his servants and his money? I do not think the sisters would have changed places with him. Far better to be in sorrow, with the Lord Jesus for your Friend, than to have everything the world can give, and be without Him.

Three days passed away. Mary sat still in her grief. At last, on the fourth day, the news came to Martha that Jesus was near. She was sure He would come, only why—why had He not come sooner? She rushed to meet Him. You can fancy her throwing herself at His feet, as the words burst out from her lips—"Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." And when Jesus said to her—"Thy brother shall rise again," she answered—"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

But that day seemed so far off; it was little comfort to her to remember that at the great resurrection she would see her dear brother again. And I do not wonder at that. We want to have our dear ones with us now; and when they are

taken away by death, we may have many long years to live before we meet them again. And even if we do know something of the Lord Jesus, and are not afraid to think of the great day when He shall call the dead from their graves, we do not know when it is coming—and it seems far off, and very small comfort. But Jesus had real comfort for Martha—and for all His people who will thoroughly trust Him. He said to her—“I am the resurrection, and the life.” Then, since He is the life, His people can never be taken away unless He pleases. Since He is the life, they will live just as long as He pleases. Since He is the life, it is a good thing for them to go to be with Him—we can hardly call it death. And since He is the resurrection, that great day will come just when He sees fit. He will do what is best, and, as David says in the Psalms—“They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.”

I do not think Martha understood it all; but she believed in Jesus and trusted Him. Jesus then sent her to call Mary.

Mary was sitting still in the house, comfortless and desolate. There were friends around her, but they could do nothing for her. Suddenly Martha came in, and whispered something in her sister's ear. Mary sprang up, and hastened out of the house. Her friends thought she had gone to the grave, and got up to follow her. They did not know that Martha had said—“The Master is come, and calleth for thee.”

Jesus had waited outside the village, so there was no crowd round Him when Mary arrived. She threw herself at His feet; she could only sob out the same thing her sister

had said—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The friends who had followed stood weeping round her.

When Jesus looked upon all these sorrowful people, He could hardly keep back His own tears. No one knew as much about sorrow as He did. He was come to bring comfort to these mourners; but He must have remembered how many people will not go to Him in their sorrow—will not have Him to comfort them. He felt all so deeply that we are told "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." He asked, "Where have ye laid Him?" They said, "Lord, come and see." He could bear it no longer: "Jesus wept."

When the people saw this, they said—"Behold, how He loved Him!" But they did not know the depth of His love. They little thought how that love would lead Him to die for sinners.

At last they came to the rocky tomb, with the great stone covering the entrance. It was four days since the dead body had been laid there. They knew that it would no longer look as it had done the day of the funeral. The body decays and goes to dust, and this must have already begun. But Jesus told them to take away the stone, and when it was done He looked to heaven, and spoke aloud to His Father, so that the people might know it was as the Son of God that He had power over the grave, and might believe in Him. Then He cried with a loud voice—"Lazarus, come forth!"

Think of the silence that followed—every eye fixed on that opening in the rock! And out of the darkness inside

there came forth a figure, wrapped up in linen—the face covered over, and the hands and feet bound, so that he moved with difficulty. Jesus told them to “loose him, and let him go,” and in another moment Martha and Mary looked again upon the face of their dear brother Lazarus.

Would not Martha and Mary now understand the message which had come to them in their trouble—“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God”? It was all clear now. And do you think they were sorry now for those anxious days and those weary nights, and that time of terrible grief while their brother lay in the tomb? Could they not thank God for it all? For their sorrow was turned into joy—a deeper and truer joy than they had known before. But for that grief they had passed through, they would never have known so much of the love of Jesus and the power of Jesus.

But there are some things which will never be made clear while we are living in this present world; strange, sad things, which we shall never understand till the Lord Jesus comes again. Till then we must be content to wait.





CHAPTER XXXV.

GOING UP TO JERUSALEM.

ST. JOHN xi. 47-57. ST. MATT. xx. 17-28. ST. MARK x. 32-52.
ST. LUKE xviii. 31-43; xix. 1-10.



I TOLD you at the beginning of this book (chap. v.) about the crowds that went up from all parts of the Holy Land to keep the Passover at Jerusalem. You should turn and look at part of that chapter again before you read this one. Imagine the different groups starting off from every town and village, and joining others on their way, till they formed a large company.

The Lord Jesus was now going up to the Passover with a great number of people. There were the twelve apostles, many other disciples besides, the women who loved to follow Him, and very likely His mother and His relations from Galilee; while multitudes joined them on the way.

In Jerusalem many people were looking for His coming. Everybody had heard of the wonderful miracle at Bethany. Some of those who had been there, and had seen Lazarus restored to life, became true believers in Jesus. But others had gone straight away to the Pharisees, and told them all

about it. And the Pharisees were so alarmed that they immediately called together the great Council.

They talked very anxiously together. They said it would never do to let things go on in this manner. Soon everybody would acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, and He would be made a King. The Romans would be angry and interfere, and then what was to become of them? So Caiaphas, the high priest, got up and said that Jesus ought to be put to death, and they all agreed that it should be done. They could not lay hands upon Him at once, for He had left Bethany, and gone away to a place called Ephraim, close to the wilderness, and they did not know where to find Him. But they counted upon His coming up to the Passover. And they commanded that whosoever knew where He was should let them know at once.

Jesus was coming, as I have told you already, and He was coming for the last time. The journey from Galilee, which He had begun openly, had been interrupted. He had paid one short visit to Jerusalem, and had again come as near as to Bethany. Both times He had gone away again to be out of reach of His enemies. But now the day was drawing near when He would lay down His life. He had left the quiet town of Ephraim, and was coming up to Jerusalem by way of Jericho publicly, with a large company following Him.

You know that the Lord Jesus liked to have His twelve apostles with Him. But when He set out on this last journey He walked on in front for a time, as if He had forgotten them. They were surprised at this, but none of them ventured

to step up to Him and interrupt Him. He seemed eager to go forward—as if His whole mind were fixed on the end of the journey. You know what the end was to be. You heard how He “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” when He bade farewell to Galilee. Now the time was close at hand. The suffering to which He was going would be terrible. And yet He did not shrink away from it. But the apostles knew He was going into danger, and as they followed Him, and saw Him pressing forward so eagerly, they were afraid.

By-and-by He turned and called them. There was a large party following Him now, and He took the twelve aside from the rest. He had told them He must suffer and die.—St. Matt. xvi. 21. They had heard that He would be cruelly given up to those that hated Him.—St. Matt. xvii. 22, 23. Now there was something more for them to hear.

And this is what He told them. The Jews would not themselves put Him to death, though they had often tried to do so. They had not really the right to punish any man with death, but were bound to bring Him to the Roman governor to be punished. That is what they would do with Jesus. He would be brought to the Roman governor, given into the hands of the Roman soldiers, and punished in the Roman manner. Do you know what this was? The Romans punished those whom they thought worthy of death (unless they were men of high rank) in the same way they punished their slaves. That terrible punishment I told you about in the second chapter of this book—that was what Jesus was going to suffer. He was to be *nailed to the cross—crucified.*

It was the most shameful punishment that any Jew could suffer, for it was written in the law of Moses—"Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." And the cross, fixed in the ground and standing upright, was like a tree. So that the blessed Saviour was about to suffer the most shameful death. He was "made a curse for us."—Gal iii. 13.

How terrible this must have sounded to the disciples! But it was as strange as it was terrible. They could not make it out.—St. Luke xviii. 34. And so they would not believe that Jesus really meant those very words He had said. They knew He had powerful enemies at Jerusalem. Still they felt sure the people would receive Him as Messiah.

So they actually began thinking about the places they should have in the kingdom! James and John wanted to sit close to Him when He should be on His throne, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Their mother Salome went with them to ask the Lord Jesus to promise this. And then the rest were angry when they heard it. Jesus told them they were making a tremendous mistake. That one who was willing to be the lowest, and to serve all the rest, would be really the greatest. For the greatest must be the one who was most like Jesus Himself. And He had stooped from heaven to save and help sinners.

Think how it must have pained Him to see such a proud and selfish spirit in the twelve whom He had chosen. Let us be anxious not to grieve Him ourselves in this way—by thinking always of ourselves, and wanting to be first.

I must tell you of two things which the Lord Jesus did at Jericho. To the very last He "went about doing good."

There was a poor blind beggar named Bartimæus sitting by the roadside as Jesus came by. He heard the tramp of many feet, and wondered what had brought such a crowd together. "What does it mean?" he asked of those who were next him. They said, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." He had heard that name before. He knew something about Jesus of Nazareth—that was He whom many people thought was the Messiah—He who was to sit on the throne of King David in Jerusalem—would not Messiah help him? So he cried out—"Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" But unkind voices answered him. Some told him to be still. What! be still and lose this one opportunity? No, he could not do that. Jesus was passing on; presently it might be too late. "He cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And presently the crowd stopped. And a voice close at hand said—"Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee." Jesus was waiting till the blind man should be brought to Him.

How eagerly Bartimæus sprang up and hastened forward. In another moment he heard the Master's voice saying to him, "Thy faith hath saved thee;" his blind eyes were opened, and he saw the Master's face; and he joyfully took his place among those that followed Jesus.

Jericho was built among groves of beautiful trees. And as the multitude went on they passed a large spreading sycamore (a kind of fig tree) which shaded the path. There

was a face looking out eagerly between the branches, to catch a sight of Jesus. It was the face of Zacchæus, the publican. Zacchæus was a rich man. There was much "toll" taken at Jericho for the sweet spices which were brought from the banks of the River Jordan to be sold. Several publicans were employed to take this toll, and Zacchæus was the chief of them all. I told you before that the publicans got the greater part of their riches by unfair dealing and cheating. And you know how they were despised and hated by other men. But Zacchæus had a great longing to see the Lord Jesus. He tried to get near Him, but he could not. He was a little man, and most likely not strong enough to make his way through the crowd. So he ran on before, and seeing this sycamore tree close to the path, he climbed up among the branches to watch for Jesus. He had no idea that Jesus knew all about him. Think of his surprise and gladness when Jesus looked straight up at him, and said—"Zacchæus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." "He made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully."

But this did not please the crowd. Why, they thought, should Jesus pass over the respectable people in Jericho, and go to the house of "a man that was a sinner"? Can you think why? It was because that sinner wanted Him. From this day Zacchæus was a different man. His sins were forgiven (St. Luke xix. 9), and his life was changed (verse 8). The good Shepherd, even on His way to death, had brought home another stray sheep.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

A GIFT TO BE REMEMBERED.

ST. MATT. xxvi. 6-16; ST. MARK xiv. 3-11; ST. LUKE xxii. 3-6;
ST. JOHN xii. 1-11.

UP the steep road leading from Jericho to Jerusalem many companies of people were travelling to the Passover. Jesus and His followers went the same way. But on reaching Bethany, He remained there with the twelve; and the rest, most likely, went on to Jerusalem.

You can think how delighted Martha, Mary, and Lazarus must have been to see Jesus again. The sisters had had some anxiety to bear, even in the midst of their great joy, when their brother was given back to them; for when the cruel Pharisees saw how many people believed in Jesus because He had raised Lazarus from the dead, they talked together about killing Lazarus as well as the Lord Jesus. But I dare say all this was forgotten now that the Master was with them again.

It was Friday when He came to Bethany, and I suppose it was at sunset, just before the Jews' Sabbath began. On the next evening there was a supper made for Him. Besides the guests who were invited, a good many people came over

from Jerusalem to catch a sight of Jesus, and of the man whom He had raised from the dead. Martha had the charge of the supper, and arranged everything.

Mary wanted to do something also for her Lord. She had one very precious thing in the house—a box of sweet ointment. It was called “ointment of spikenard,” and was very highly valued. It was worth “three hundred pence.” You will think that is not much ; but it meant the same as *ten pounds* of our money. You can guess what Mary was going to do with this. Of course the guests had all had oil poured on their heads, according to the custom. But Mary wanted to anoint her Lord over again with some of this costly spikenard. How much should she use ? A little of it would have been thought a handsome gift. But Mary could not measure it out. Her heart was full of love to Jesus, and she could not stop and think how much she should give. She could do nothing better with her treasure than use it for Him. So she came round behind Him as He was at the table, broke the box, and poured the whole of the ointment over His head. It ran down to His feet, and then Mary wiped the feet with her hair.

I daresay she did not want to be noticed. She had said nothing about it, and had done it very quietly. But the delicious scent filled the whole room, and everyone turned to see where it came from. Then a voice at the table said it was a great waste—the ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor. And presently other voices at the table said the same thing.

But Jesus said—“Why trouble ye her ? She hath wrought

a good work on Me. For ye have the poor with you always, . . . but Me ye have not always."

For He was going to leave them very soon. They fancied and hoped that He was soon going to be a King. Mary had brought Him just such a gift as might be made to a king. And, as I told you before, the Jewish kings had always been anointed. But there was one thing that sweet ointment was used for which I have not yet told you. It was put on dead bodies when they were wrapped in linen to be laid in the grave. And on that same day, one week later, the dead body of Jesus would be lying cold in the grave! He thought of it in the midst of that joyful feast, and He said of Mary—"She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying." "The burying"—how strange it must have sounded! It must have sent a chill through the hearts of the disciples, although they so soon forgot it.

And at the very time the Lord Jesus was saying this, His enemies were plotting how they might get Him into their power. They had heard He was in Bethany; they knew He was coming to Jerusalem; but how should they manage to make Him their prisoner? They dared not try it on the day of the feast. There would be a crowd gathered together, and the people would certainly prevent their doing it. If they only knew when to find Him alone, and where to find Him!

Many times they thought over the matter, and one day while they were talking about it, they heard that a man wanted to see them. They let him come in, and then he told them he would help them to find Jesus, if they would pay

him. They were very glad, and agreed to pay—how much do you think? Just as much as a man who had caused the death of a slave by accident would pay to the slave's master—thirty silver pieces.—Exod. xxi. 32. The Lord Jesus was given up into the hands of His enemies for the price of a slave!

And who could be so wicked and cruel as to betray Him? It was the man who had spoken of Mary's waste of the ointment, and pretended to think so much of the poor. This man was actually one of the twelve apostles! I told you once before (chap. xxiii.) that they all loved Jesus truly except one. This one was Judas Iscariot. The twelve lived as one family with their Master. All their money was put together in one bag, and Judas had charge of the bag. And he was a *thief*. I dare say he began by taking a little piece of money out of the bag for himself now and then. Then he got fonder and fonder of money, and took more and more. And now he was willing to betray his Master for a slave's price.

Jesus knew all about it. He had told His disciples some months before that he should be *betrayed*. But though He knew what was going on that night, and though He had spoken of His "burying," He looked forward to the time when His sufferings should be over, and when the good news that He had died for sinners should be preached everywhere. And He said that in that time to come Mary's loving deed should never be forgotten. Wherever the gospel should be preached, it should be told how Mary had delighted to give Him the best she had; how she had "done what she could" for Him before His death.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

A GREAT DAY AT JERUSALEM.

ST. MATT. xxi. 1-16. ST. MARK xi. 1-11, 15-18. ST. LUKE xix. 28-48.
ST. JOHN xii. 12-29.

T was the first day of the week, the morning after the Sabbath. Two men were entering a village near Bethany called Bethphage. At the door of one of the houses there was a young ass tied up, together with its mother. The men went up to the door and began to unfasten the rope which bound them. The people to whom the asses belonged were standing by, and they said, "What are you doing? Why do you let the asses loose?" Then the two men replied—"The Lord hath need of him." When the owners heard this they were quite content. For it was the Lord Jesus who had sent His disciples to fetch the young ass.

Why did Jesus want it? He was going to Jerusalem with a great company of disciples, and He wanted the ass to ride upon. In England donkeys are not thought much of, and people like best to ride upon horses. But in Palestine the ass was a very beautiful animal, and well cared for. Kings,

and other great men among the Jews, had always ridden on asses. Long ago one of the prophets had written—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."—Zech. ix. 9.

This prophecy was now to be fulfilled. Jesus had many times come to Jerusalem, but He had always come on foot, quietly, and once secretly.—St. John vii. 10. But now, this once, He was going to enter Jerusalem before all the crowds assembled for the Passover, as the Messiah, the King whom God had promised them.

The ass which was brought to Jesus had never been ridden before. Such an animal is always very stubborn and difficult to manage, and needs training before it can be used. But there was no difficulty with Jesus; all things obey Him.

The disciples laid their cloaks over the back of the animal for Jesus to ride on, and then they set out.

They were all so happy! They thought the time had come at last—Jesus was really going to take possession of His kingdom. This was the day they had waited for so long. And what a King He would be! They called to mind all the wonderful and gracious works that He had done. They thought of the multitudes fed—of the sick restored—of Bartimæus, once a blind beggar, now amongst them and full of joy like the rest—of Lazarus, raised out of the grave to life and health. They could no longer walk on quietly, content with talking about Him. They "began to rejoice

and praise God with a loud voice." They took up some of the words from their great *Hallel*, or psalm of praise—"Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." So with joyful shouts and songs they passed along the road that winds round the top of Mount Olivet.

But when they got to the highest point, Jesus stopped a moment. From this spot there was a magnificent view. The city of Jerusalem lay before them—far more beautiful than any city you could see in England; for in Palestine the air is clearer, and the roofs are white, and all the colours are brighter. Down below them was the shady valley where the brook Kedron flowed, and on the other side rose the hill where the Temple stood, with its gilded towers glittering so brightly in the sunshine that the sight was quite dazzling.

For a moment there would be a hush. Everybody's heart was full. And I should think that after a glance at the kingly city, the eyes of all would turn to the King who stood there gazing on it.

What did they see? There was no joy on His face. He loved that city. Time after time He had gone up there, and shown the people "many good works" from His Father.—St. John x. 32. But time after time they had rejected Him. He knew that this last time they would do the same. And He knew all the terrible woes that would come upon them afterwards. He could not keep back His grief. He wept aloud, and said—"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but they are hid from thine eyes."

And yet while He was speaking there was a crowd of people coming from the city to meet Him. Those who were at Bethany the evening before had, no doubt, spread the news that He was to come that day. And many who had seen His miracles in Galilee and in Peræa, and many others who had heard of the great miracle at Bethany, hastened out to



welcome Him. On their way they cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them all along the road where He was to pass. Others threw their cloaks in His path. It was their custom to do this for a king, or for anyone they wished to honour.

So the joyful procession passed down the hill, some in

front, waving their palm branches, and some following behind, while they kept on singing—"Hosanna to the Son of David : Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord : Hosanna in the highest!"

When they reached Jerusalem all the city was greatly excited. You have heard how crowded it was at such times. And there must have been numbers of people from distant parts who knew nothing at all about Jesus. Many Jews were now living in foreign countries, and no doubt a large number of these had come up to the feast. And there were Gentiles who had come with them, and who wished to know more of the true God. So in every street and from many a house-top there were voices asking as the multitude went by—"Who is this?" And the crowd answered—"This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

The Lord Jesus went straight to His Father's house—to the Temple. He found the same things going on there that He had seen three years before. The courts were full of cattle and sheep, and buyers and sellers and money-changers. Do you remember how He cast them all out before?—Chap. ix. Once more He cleansed the Temple, as the prophet had long ago written that Messiah should do. Then the crowds gathered round Him again ; people who were blind and lame came to Him and were healed, and the courts of the Temple were filled with His praise.

None sang more joyfully than the children. They were so delighted to have Him among them. He was not a proud g, nor a stern Prophet, whom they dared not come near.

He welcomed them, He smiled upon them, He liked to hear their songs of gladness.

The Pharisees were watching all that went on. They had been so displeased when they first heard the disciples praising Him as Messiah, that they had actually asked Jesus to stop them! And now they were still more angry because the children sang "Hosanna to the Son of David." Again they complained to Jesus. But He answered—"Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" These words which Jesus repeated are written in the 8th Psalm. And the psalm goes on to say, "Because of thine enemies." Is it not pleasant to think that, while the enemies of Jesus were seeking to kill Him, little children were singing His praises?

Among the people from foreign countries who were now at Jerusalem, there were some Greeks, who were very anxious to see Jesus. They came to Philip, and told Him what they wanted. Philip was not quite sure what he ought to do, so he spoke first to Andrew about it. You know the two were old friends from the same town, Bethsaida. Then Andrew and Philip went together to Jesus. We are not told whether the Lord Jesus received these Greeks, but I think we may be sure that He did. And perhaps the words which He then spoke were meant for them as well as for the disciples. He said that the hour was come that He should be glorified. Only it would be in a very different way from what they expected; it must be through dying. And He said that those who came to Him must be ready to go where He

went, and must not shrink from suffering. Then He added a beautiful promise—"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."

Then, looking up, He prayed to His Father. And once more a voice came to Him from heaven. You remember it had come at His baptism, and on the mount when He was transfigured. And now it came to Him in the midst of the multitude at Jerusalem. Some of those who heard the sound said it was thunder; others thought it was the voice of an angel. But the apostles must have known that it was the Father speaking to His "beloved Son."

What a great day this had been in the life of the Lord Jesus! This once he had allowed the people to do Him honour as they would do to a King. This once he had been welcomed to Jerusalem as Messiah, the Son of David. It was a day for all His disciples to remember. But they could hardly forget how He had wept over the city, and how He had spoken of His death. There must have been a strange, dark shadow stealing over their joy. They did not yet understand why the "Good Shepherd" must give "His life for the sheep."





CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE LAST DAYS.

ST. MATT. xxi. 23-46 ; xxii.-xxv. ; xxvi. 1, 2. ST. MARK xi. 27-33 ; xii.,
xiii. ST. LUKE xix. 47, 48 ; xx., xxi. ST. JOHN xii. 46.

AFTER that wonderful day in Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus went back to Bethany for the night. I am not sure whether He slept under the roof of the friends whom He loved. If so, it was the last night He ever spent there. When the Pharisees heard all the people singing His praises, it seems that for a moment they were in despair. They said, "The world is gone after Him !" But they did not give up their wicked plans. They saw that it would be impossible to seize Him in broad daylight, in the sight of the multitude ; it must be done quietly at night. So the home at Bethany was no longer a safe resting-place for Him. And the next two days, when He left Jerusalem in the evening, and went out to the Mount of Olives, He did not go on to Bethany. He chose out some sheltered spot on the hill-side, so that His enemies did not know where to find Him.—St. Luke xxi. 37 ; St. John xii. 36.

Those two days—Monday and Tuesday—He spent in the

Temple. Early in the morning He was there, and the crowd gathered round Him at once to listen to his teaching. But the Pharisees were there too, trying all they could to turn the minds of the people against Him.

On Monday morning all the chief men came together to Him. You can fancy the crowd making way for them, and listening to hear what they said. They had come to ask Jesus what right He had to make a public entry into the city, to let the people salute Him as Messiah, and to turn the buyers and sellers out of the Temple. "By what authority," they said, "doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?" The Lord Jesus replied by asking them a question. He asked whether John the Baptist had been sent from God. This puzzled them terribly. They could not answer "Yes," because they had not believed John, and you know he had pointed out Jesus as Messiah. But they dared not say "No," because it would make the people so angry. So they were obliged to say, "We cannot tell." This made them look very foolish before all the people, and they could not open their lips again. And that day Jesus solemnly warned them of their guilt in three parables, which you will find in the twenty-second and twenty-third chapters of St. Mathew's Gospel.

They would not venture to come to Him again. But after talking together they determined to send some other men, who should pretend to be truly anxious to learn from Him. These men were to try to get Him to say something which they might turn against Him.

I have told you several times how much the Jews disliked being under the Emperor of Rome. They had to pay him a sum of money every year, and such a sum is called "tribute money." These men who were sent by the Pharisees came and begged the Lord Jesus to tell them whether it were really right to pay this. They fancied they had asked a very clever question. If Jesus should answer that it was right, they could say, "He is on the side of the Romans!" and that would soon set the people against Him. If He should say it was not right, then they could go at once to the Roman governor and accuse Him.

But Jesus knew all that they were thinking, and He called them what they really were—*hypocrites!* Then He said, "Shew me the tribute money." There was a likeness and a name on the coin which they fetched, just as you see the name and the picture of the Queen on our money. He asked them whose was the name and the likeness. They said "Cæsar's." For the Roman Emperors were all called Cæsar. Then Jesus answered them, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." For if they had been serving God, they would not have asked that question.

When these men failed, more came forward, and one after another tried to "catch Him in His words." It was just as David had written of Him long ago—"They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things."—Ps. xxxviii. 12. "Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me

for evil.”—Ps. lvi. 5. Was it not wonderful that the Lord Jesus should stoop to bear all this?

But while He was willing to suffer for our sakes, He had to say some terrible words to those who rejected Him—“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”

Though He died to save sinners, He hates sin, and cannot pass it over. If we will not let Him save us from sin, then sin will be our ruin. The Lord Jesus knew that ruin would come upon Jerusalem, and it grieved Him to the heart. Almost His last words in the Temple were words of sorrow over the guilty city—“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”

But He had also a bright and blessed word for those who believed, which might be a comfort to them in the dark days which were at hand—“I am come a light unto the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness.”

Then He left the Temple for the last time. How little the crowd imagined that they should never again hear His voice in those courts!

But I must tell you one thing that happened before He left. Among all the multitude He noticed a poor woman going up to one of the chests where people dropped in their offerings for the service of God. Many rich people were giving a great deal. The woman dropped in two little pieces of brass money, the very least that were used, each worth

half-a-farthing. But she was a widow, and it was all the money she had. And Jesus called His disciples, and told them that this poor widow had given more than anyone else, for she had given "all her living."

When He had left the Temple, He went and sat with His disciples on the Mount of Olives. He had yet many things to tell them. He spoke of the ruin that was coming on the beautiful city before them: that Temple which they were all so proud of was to be thrown down, and "not one stone left upon another." And so it happened when the city was besieged and taken by the Romans about forty years after. Then He spoke of the end of the world, and of His second coming. He told them about it in three parables, which you will find in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew. And He bade them "be ready," "watch," and "pray." He did not say these things for them only. He thought of all who should hear of Him in the years to come. He meant them for us too.

But before they went to rest that night He had another thing to speak of—a thing which was shortly to come to pass—"Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." Only two days more, and then He must die!

It was Tuesday evening when He said that. On Wednesday morning the people were early in the Temple, as usual, expecting Him. But He never came. They must have been very much surprised, and I should think they were very disappointed. No doubt the chief priests and the rulers took this opportunity of speaking against Jesus. And the dis-

appointed people would be willing to listen. He had not done what they expected. He had not claimed His kingdom. He had not told them to rise against the Romans and drive them out. He had spoken very strangely of His dying. That was not the kind of Messiah they wanted. And in the next two days those who had shouted His praises were entirely turned against Him.

How the Lord Jesus spent these two days the Bible does not tell us. Perhaps some part of them may have been spent with His friends at Bethany, and with His mother, who must have been somewhere near. And some hours would be passed quite alone in prayer to His Father. Do you remember what He had said soon after He began His ministry?—"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." All His life He had been doing that work, and now it was nearly finished. He must pass through suffering, and shame, and death, to finish it, but He was ready. We are told in the Psalms what was the feeling in His heart. It was this—"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God."—Heb. x. 7; Ps. xl. 7, 8. For "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" for us. In two days more the lambs would be killed for the Passover. And then Jesus, the "Lamb of God," would die for "the sin of the world."





CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LAST SUPPER.

ST. MATT. xxvi. 17-30. ST. MARK xiv. 12-26. ST. LUKE xxii. 7-30.
ST. JOHN xiii.-xviii. 1.

N Thursday morning the disciples asked the Lord Jesus where they should get ready the Paschal Supper. I have told you something about this before.—Chap. v. Jesus wished to eat it in Jerusalem, alone with His twelve apostles, for it would be His last meal with them. He sent Peter and John into the city, and told them they would meet a man carrying a jar of water. They were to follow him to the house where he carried it, and to take the master of the house a message from Himself. They did so, and when the master of the house heard the message, He showed them at once a large upper room. The tables and couches were there, all ready for a meal. There was also a large jar of water, a basin, and a towel.

It was a busy day in Jerusalem. Thousands of lambs were used at the Passover Feast, and all must be first offered up in the Temple, and some of the blood sprinkled on the altar. Then one lamb was roasted for each household. Or

if one family were too small to use the whole of it, two families would join together at the supper. There were bitter herbs to be got, and "unleavened bread." The Jews were also accustomed to use a sauce made of fruits and vinegar, and into this they dipped their bread.

In the evening the Lord Jesus came with the rest of the twelve to the upper room. Everything was ready. Before they took their places there was one thing to be done. Their feet were hot and dusty with the long walk, and needed washing, for you know only the sole of the foot was covered by the sandals. This was the business of a servant, and they had no servant with them. Which of them would do it for the rest?

None liked to take the servant's place. Before now they had disputed which of them should be the greatest, and the old dispute began again, and they all made haste to take their places without attending to the washing. You remember how the couches were placed—round three sides of the table. The couch that stood at the top, between the other two, was thought the best place, and the seat in the middle would be the one for the Lord Jesus. John had the place on His right hand, for Jesus liked to have this disciple close to Him. He is called in the Bible "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Some people think he was the youngest of the twelve.

Meanwhile, the basin had been filled with water, and was brought round where the disciples lay. But who did it? While the disciples were busy getting their places, their Master had left the table to do the servant's duty. How

grieved and ashamed they must have felt, when they saw Him come round with the towel and the basin ! None dared say anything until He came to Peter. Peter burst out with the words, " Lord, dost thou wash my feet ? " Then Jesus answered him with those words which I have told you before—" What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter." It is but very little we can understand now of the great love of our Lord Jesus. How astonished we shall be some day when we see how deep and wonderful it is !

When He had finished, and had taken His place at the table, He said to His disciples—" If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." You see, if we are true disciples of the Lord Jesus, we must be willing to help one another, and not think it too troublesome or too disagreeable.

Think how patient the Lord Jesus was with His disciples. It must have grieved Him much to see them give way to pride and selfishness, but how gently He had shown them that they were wrong ! And yet I am sure they could never forget it.

There was a grief worse than this, which was weighing on Him. He bore it for a time patiently. But at last He was so troubled that He spoke out—" One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me."

Think what the disciples must have felt ! It was sad enough to hear their Master speak of leaving them and of dying. But that one of them should give Him up to death

—it was too dreadful! Sorrowfully they asked Him, one after another, “Lord, is it I?” Even Judas asked “Is it I?” and Jesus told Him yes, but no one else heard this. Then they looked round at one another, and Peter made a sign to John to ask the Lord Jesus who it was. No one but John heard the answer—“He it is to whom I shall give a sop,



when I have dipped it.” It was a common thing at a meal for a man to dip a morsel of food in the sauce, and hand it to his neighbour. Jesus handed such a morsel to Judas, saying to him, “That thou doest, do quickly.” And Judas immediately started up and went out—away from the Paschal supper, away from the presence of the Lord—out into sin, and darkness, and ruin.

The other disciples imagined he had gone to buy something that was wanted, or to give something to the poor. But as the supper went on, and he never came back, I think they must have guessed the dreadful truth.

The Lord Jesus was now left alone with His eleven faithful ones. And at that supper-table He gave them something to do which should help to keep them always in mind of Him. It was also to be a sign to other people that they were His disciples.

He took the bread in His hands, thanked God for it, and then broke it and gave to them. And He said—"This is My body, which is given for you." And when the cup of wine was passed round after supper, He said—"This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you." What did He mean? He meant that His body was to be bruised and torn, and His blood shed, for their sakes. A "testament" or "covenant" (the Greek word means both) is an agreement or promise. God promises to give pardon, and blessing, and eternal life to all who believe in Jesus. All these good things come to us because Jesus died—because His blood was poured out for us.

He told His disciples after He was gone to do just what He had done—to break bread and eat it together, and to pour out wine and drink it together. He said—"This do in remembrance of Me." And ever since that time His people have met together to take the "Lord's Supper." Sometimes it is called the "Communion," because it is a sharing together. It is a sign to everybody that they believe in the blessed

Saviour who died for them. And they will go on showing forth His death until He comes again.—1 Cor. xi. 26.

Then the little company sang together the psalms which the Jews used to sing after their Paschal Feast. There is a good deal in those psalms about trouble, and danger, and deliverance. But no trouble or danger was ever like that which the Lord Jesus was now going into, that He might deliver us! If He had not taken our place, there would have been nothing for us but danger, death, and ruin.

The disciples did not understand all this. They had joined with their Lord in the song of praise; but it must have been strange to them, for their hearts were full of sorrow. The Lord Jesus spoke many loving words of comfort to them. I have not time to tell you them all, but you will find them in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of St. John's Gospel. He told them they should never be left alone. He was going to send them "another Comforter"—the Holy Spirit—who should come into their hearts and stay with them, and make them remember and understand all the things He had said to them. Lastly, He prayed for them to His Father—prayed that they might be kept safe, that they might be made holy, and that they might share His glory. He asked this not only for those disciples who were with Him, but for all who should ever believe on Him and follow Him. If you are His disciples, that prayer was for you.

Then He left the upper room with the eleven, and went out through the quiet street, out of the city, down the steep
" " " and across the brook Kedron to the Mount of Olives.



CHAPTER XL.

THE GARDEN ON THE MOUNT.

ST. MATT. xxvi. 31-46. ST. MARK xiv. 27-42. ST. LUKE xxii. 31-46.
ST. JOHN xviii. 1.



HERE was a place on the Mount of Olives where the Lord Jesus had spent some hours during those last days of His life. It was a garden called Gethsemane.

I am sure you are all fond of a garden. You like to walk along the winding paths, and play on the soft grass under the trees, and look at the gay flowers which you find in a garden. No doubt the Lord Jesus, as a child, had liked the same things. But while He was in Galilee, we never read of His going into a garden. We are told of His getting away into a solitary place, or up into a mountain. You know why He chose out such places. It was that He might be alone for a little while, and have time for prayer. And I dare say that this garden of Gethsemane was the quietest place He could find on the slopes of Olivet. There were plenty of thick trees, beneath which He would be sheltered and shut out from the sight of any passer-by. The garden

may perhaps have belonged to one of those who believed in Him and loved Him.

There is a place which travellers go and see now on the Mount of Olives, which is called the Garden of Gethsemane. There are a few old olive-trees in it, and there is a wall built all round. We do not know whether this was really the garden that Jesus chose. Everything is much changed since that time. Most of the beautiful trees and flowers which then made the mountain such a lovely place have disappeared.

It must have looked very lovely on that last night Jesus was there. It was bright moonlight, for the Passover was always kept at the time of the full moon. And, except where the trees and bushes threw a dark shade on the ground, everything would be lit up with a silvery whiteness. But it was a sad walk from the city down into the valley, across the brook, and up among the trees towards the garden. For the Lord Jesus had another sad thing to tell His disciples. He told them these sad things that they might know afterwards that nothing had taken Him by surprise. They had been with Him in many dangers, but now, He said, that night they would all forsake Him! Peter would not believe this, and he answered—"Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison and to death." And Peter meant it, for he truly loved his Lord. But he forgot his own weakness and sinfulness. And Jesus told him—"This night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Then, as they entered the garden, He said to His disciples

—"Sit ye here, while I shall pray." And He took Peter, James, and John a little farther with Him. Presently He said to them—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death : tarry ye here and watch with Me." You see He looked to His friends to feel for Him in His great sorrow, just as we want them to feel for us in our little troubles.

Then He went a few steps further. You know that prayer was His delight. He loved to be quite alone, that He might pour out His heart to His Father. But now we read that He was "in an agony." He did not look up to heaven as usual, but "fell on His face." Why was this?

There was a terrible burden weighing on Him, the thought of a fearful trouble that was coming. Was it the pain or the shame of the cross? No; it was something far more dreadful.

Why was He going to bear that pain and that shame? Why was He going to die "the death of the cross"?

Because He was going to take the sinner's place. Your sin, and mine, and the sin of all the world (St. John i. 29), was to be put upon Him, and He was going to bear what we deserved.

And this was the trouble—this was the burden; that He must be "made sin for us" (2 Cor. v. 21)—"made a curse for us."—Gal. iii. 13. It is too deep for us to understand. But try and think for a moment what it must have been to the holy Son of God, in whom there was no sin, to take the sin of the world upon Him, and stand in the place of the sinner! There is a wonderful verse in the Psalms which says—"Mine

iniquities are gone over mine head : as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Ps. xxxviii. 4) ; and again—" Mine iniquities have taken hold upon Me, so that I am not able to look up."—Ps. xl. 12. Think of this burden being laid upon the Lord Jesus !

But what was His prayer ? It was this—" Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me : nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done." He shrank (as we shrink from pain) from the bitter cup of suffering He would have to drink ; but His heart was steadfastly fixed to do the will of His Father.

He rose up and came to His three disciples. Were they watching with Him—praying with Him ? No ; sorrowful and weary, they had fallen asleep ! And yet He had asked them to watch. In their own sorrow they had forgotten His sorrow. He had not a single earthly friend to comfort Him. And yet Peter had promised to go with Him to prison and to death ! " Simon, sleepest thou ?" said the Lord to him ; " couldst not thou watch one hour ?"

He went away again and prayed. And then a second time He came to His disciples. Again they had fallen asleep. And all alone He knelt down once more with His face to the ground ; " and being in an agony He prayed more earnestly : and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Was this prayer heard ? Yes ! For He prayed, " Thy will be done," and it was the Father's will that He should die for sinners. But the anguish He was suffering was too

much for Him ; it was more than His body could bear. And an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen Him.

Then once more He rose up and came to His disciples. " Rise up," He said, calmly and quietly, " let us go ; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand." The hour was come, and He was ready to meet His enemies.

No wonder that when St. Paul afterwards spoke of the love that bore all this for us, he called it " the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." May we be able to say—" We love Him, because He first loved us !"





CHAPTER XLI.

THE HOUR OF TRIAL.

ST. MATT. xxvi. 47-75. ST. MARK xiv. 43-72. ST. LUKE xxii. 47-65.
ST. JOHN xviii. 1-27.



AS it only for His own sake that the Lord Jesus told His disciples to watch and pray with Him in the garden? It was for their sakes as well. Their time of trial was coming too, and they needed strength to be ready for it. He had said to them—"Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Yet they had slept on. Now the time was really come. They sprang up to follow Him, and as they turned towards the gate of the garden, they saw a glare of light in the distance and a crowd coming towards them.

There were Roman soldiers with their armour and their weapons; and with them the servants of the chief priests and rulers, armed with clubs, and carrying lanterns and torches. In front of them walked Judas Iscariot. He had gone from the supper-table to the chief priests, and told them he could show them where to find Jesus that night. And in great haste they had got a guard of soldiers from the governor, and

Judas had led the party out of the city, over the brook—the same way Jesus had come—and straight on to the garden of Gethsemane. But why did they bring lanterns and torches, when it was bright moonlight? For fear He might be hidden in the dark shade of the trees, or in some cave in the rock. And that the soldiers might know whom they were to take prisoner, Judas told them to seize the man whom He would kiss. They little thought that the Lord Jesus was ready to meet them—ready to be taken—ready to suffer.

Judas came forward and did as he had said. And the Lord Jesus bore that deceitful, cruel kiss. Then the soldiers came near, wondering, I should think, that Jesus did not try to get away. He asked them quietly whom they wanted. And when they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth," He said, "I am He." And instead of stepping forward to seize Him, those strong, rough soldiers started back in wonder and terror, and fell to the ground! They could not stand before Him for a moment, unless He chose. Then He spoke again. He was ready to go with them, but His disciples must not be harmed. "If therefore ye seek Me," He said, "let these go their way."

It was all so sudden, so startling, that for a few moments the disciples could only look on with fear and horror. But when Peter saw his Master in the hands of the soldiers, and saw them begin to bind Him with ropes as if He had been a thief or a murderer, he sprang forward, drew his sword (for the disciples had brought two swords with them), and struck one of the high priest's servants. He cut right through the

man's ear. But the Lord Jesus had one more miracle of mercy to do before He died. He stretched out the hand that was still free, and touched the man's ear and healed it. Then He told Peter to put back his sword. There was no need for Him to use that, for in a moment Jesus might have had an army of angels round Him. But He chose to be taken.

What could the disciples do? They had all said they would never forsake Him. Would you not expect them to follow where He was led, to keep as close as they could to Him? Surely they had an opportunity now to show how much they loved Him. But they were not ready. They had forgotten how weak they were. They had not sought for strength. They had been sleeping instead of praying. And now their courage failed them. They dared not face those stern soldiers and that fierce crowd. "They all forsook Him and fled." Alone the Lord Jesus was led away by His enemies.

But after a while two of the apostles turned back again. No doubt they felt ashamed and grieved at what they had done. One was John, the "disciple whom Jesus loved," and the other was Peter. They saw the crowd returning to the city, and they followed in the distance.

The crowd stopped at the door of the high priest's palace. Although it was night, several of the priests and rulers were assembled there. The Lord Jesus was led in through the open court in the middle of the palace to a hall raised a little above it. The servants remained below in the court, and made a fire there to warm themselves, for the night was cold.

John had been in that palace before, and the maid at the gate let him pass in, and he persuaded her to let Peter come in too. Peter went up to the fire and stood there with the servants. I suppose that John kept quietly by himself, for we hear no more about him.

You know that when a prisoner is brought before a judge, it is because there is a charge against him—that means that he is thought to have done something wrong. Some one is there to say what crime he is charged with, and then the judge must try to find out whether he is really guilty or not. Unless he is proved to be guilty he cannot be punished.

Now the chief priests dared not put the Lord Jesus to death just because they hated Him. They must find some charge to bring against Him. But who could bring anything against one whose whole life had been blameless? So they got “false witnesses”—that is, men who could come and say things that were not true. But none of these could agree in what they said. And by the Jewish law they must get two witnesses to agree before they could pronounce a man guilty. At last two men came forward with a charge. What do you think it was? It was that Jesus had once said—“I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.” Do you remember when the Lord Jesus had said something like this? I told you about it before.—Chap ix. But they had put the words quite wrong.

Even these two witnesses did not agree, and the priests did not know what to do. When the Lord Jesus was first brought in, they had begun to ask Him about His teaching,

hoping they might find something to turn against Him. But He only answered that He had taught publicly, and that everything He had said was well known. His enemies were so enraged at this answer that one of them struck the holy Saviour. It is terrible to read this, but it is only the beginning of all the shameful and cruel things they did. They were furious because He would answer nothing to all the charges they tried to bring against Him. At last the high priest asked Him plainly whether He were Christ, the Son of God. And then the Lord kept silence no longer. He answered—"I am : and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

I think it must have thrilled their hearts with a strange fear to hear such words from the One who stood there as their prisoner ! But the high priest cried out, "He hath spoken blasphemy !" and rent his clothes to show his horror. And every voice exclaimed, "He is guilty of death !"

It is dreadful to read what followed—"And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophecy : and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands." The blessed Saviour bore it all in silence—just as the Prophet Isaiah had written of Him—"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth : He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so openeth He not His mouth."

His two disciples, Peter and John, must have heard and

seen this. What pain it must have been to them ! But there was another feeling in Peter's mind too. He was very much afraid lest anyone should find out who he was. I suppose he had gone and sat down with the others at the fire that he might look as if he were one of them. But a woman came up, stared in his face, and said, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." Yes, indeed ? He was one of the twelve "chosen to be with Him." And he had loved to be with Him. But now he was frightened. Suppose they should seize him, and bind him, as they had done his Master ! He dared not go with Jesus to prison and to death. Instead of speaking out truly, and boldly, and faithfully, he denied his Lord. He pretended not to understand what the woman meant. He said—"I know not what thou sayest."

Then, for fear some one else might speak to him, he went out into the porch. It was near morning, and as he got into the porch the cock crew. But there another woman noticed him, and said to those who were standing by—"This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter now answered with an oath—"I do not know the man !" Then, determined to brave it out, he came back into the court and mixed with the servants again, and even joined in their talk. You see he had, of his own accord, entered into temptation—the very thing which the Lord Jesus had told him to watch and pray against. If he had stood alone quietly, or side by side with John, watching his Lord, and thinking only of Him, how different it might have been !

Just as day was beginning to break, Peter's third trial

came. Those around him had noticed how he talked. People from Galilee pronounced many words differently from the people in Judea. So they said to Him—"Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean." Then for the third time Peter denied his Lord. He began to curse and to swear, saying—"I know not this man of whom ye speak." As he spoke, the cock crew again. And the Lord Jesus turned round and looked upon Peter.

The Master had not forgotten His servant. He knew all that had passed, but He had prayed for Peter, and He loved him still. What a look that must have been, so full of love, and so full of sadness! It went right into Peter's heart. He remembered what the Lord had said—"Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice." He would not believe it then—he would not be warned—he fancied himself so strong. And now he had done the evil thing! The Lord Jesus had not only suffered from the hands of His enemies, but His own servant, His own friend, had denied Him! Which do you think was the most painful? David wrote long ago—"It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. . . . But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and my acquaintance."—Ps. lv. 12, 13. Do you not think Peter's words must have been sharper and more painful to the Lord Jesus than all the blows and the insults of His enemies?

But now Peter's boasting and Peter's fears were all gone. He thought no more of his own strength or his own safety. He forgot all about the faces round him. All his thoughts

were of the loving, patient Saviour—that he had been unfaithful to Him—that he had given Him the sharpest wound. He “went out, and wept bitterly.”

Peter never forgot that day, and he never wished to hide what he had done. And while he remembered his own fall, he remembered the wonderful sight he had seen from that court in the high priest's palace—the holy Son of God standing silent and patient while men were mocking and ill-treating Him. And, long after, he wrote how “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not.”—1 Pet. ii. 21-23.





CHAPTER XLII.

THE HOLY ONE CONDEMNED.

ST. MATT. xxvii. 1-31. ST. MARK xv. 1-20. ST. LUKE xxii. 66-71;
xxiii. 1-25. ST. JOHN xviii. 28-40; xix. 1-16.



HE morning was now come, and nearly all the men who belonged to the great council of the Jews were gathered together in the high priest's palace. The few who had been there all night had no right to try and condemn a prisoner by themselves, so they now brought the Lord Jesus before the whole assembly. The Council made haste to pronounce Him guilty, and then they hurried him off to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and he was led by the soldiers into the "hall of judgment." They did not like to go themselves into the house of a Gentile at the time of their Passover, lest they should be "defiled," that is, not fit to keep the feast. So Pilate came out to them, and stood on a raised terrace outside his palace. He knew there was a prisoner to be brought to him, because he had been asked to send out the soldiers the night before. And no doubt he had expected to see some rough and desperate-looking man. How surprised he must have been to see one standing there looking

meek and gentle, and yet calm and fearless! What could they have to say against such a man?

They began to say that He tried to set the people against the Government; that He told the people not to pay tribute to the Roman Emperor, and that He called Himself a king. It sounded very strange. Pilate could hardly believe that it was true of the prisoner he had seen. He went back into the judgment hall to speak to Him. Then Jesus told him that His kingdom was not of this world. Pilate did not care to understand what Jesus said, but he felt sure this man had done no harm. So he went out again and said to the priests and rulers—"I find in Him no fault at all." They were very angry. They said—"Why, He has stirred up the people everywhere. He began in Galilee, and now He has been doing it here."

Now Pilate knew this could not be true. The Jews would never be anxious to have a man punished for speaking against the Roman Government, for they hated it themselves. Pilate was a bad man. He had done many unjust and cruel things. But he did not want to do a wrong thing just to please these Jews. And he did not want to put *this* prisoner to death unjustly. He had never seen one like Him before, and He felt that it would be a dreadful thing. So when he heard them speak of Galilee, he thought, "I will send Him to Herod."

You have heard before (chap. xii.) of King Herod, who reigned over Galilee, and whose palace was at Tiberias, on the shores of the lake. It was he who had had John the

Baptist put to death. Herod had often heard of the Lord Jesus, and wished very much to see Him. Was this a good wish? It was only curiosity. He wanted to be amused, and he thought it would be a fine thing to see the Prophet of Nazareth work a miracle. He was at this time in Jerusalem, with his soldiers and his followers.

Pilate knew it would please Herod that the prisoner should be sent for him to judge. So the Lord Jesus was now taken to the palace of Herod. Just think for a moment of all He had gone through that night. He had passed many nights without sleep, but none like this one. He had suffered first that terrible agony in the garden. Then He had been seized, bound, and roughly dragged back to the city. Then in the high priest's palace He had been mocked and ill-used. In the chill of the early morning He had been hurried along the streets to Pilate's judgment-hall. And now He was led forth again before the selfish and cruel King Herod.

Herod was disappointed that he could get nothing out of his prisoner. You know what loving words the Lord Jesus had for all who came to learn from Him. But to this king, who only wanted amusement, He would say nothing. Then again the holy Saviour was mocked and insulted. A gay robe was thrown over his shoulders, and then the king and his soldiers made sport of Him. But Herod did not care to be troubled any further with a prisoner, and so he sent Him back to Pilate.

By this time the streets of the city were full of people hurrying along. Where were they going? To the governor's

palace. It was the custom for him to set free one Jewish prisoner at the time of the feast, and they were coming to remind him of this. Pilate had not forgotten it. And when Jesus was brought back to him, he immediately thought—"I will set Him free: the priests and rulers are jealous of Him; that is why they want Him put to death; but surely the people will take His part.—St. Matt. xxvii. 18; St. Mark xv. 10. So first he called for the rulers, and told them that neither he nor Herod had found any fault in this prisoner, and that he should set Him free. There was another prisoner sentenced to death for robbery and murder, whose name was Barabbas. And when the multitude had gathered together before the palace, Pilate went out to them and said—"Which of the two shall I release unto you, Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?"

Do you remember what the priests and rulers had been doing the last few days—how wickedly they had been speaking against the Lord Jesus—how cunningly they had turned the minds of the people against Him? They had quite succeeded; the people were ready to say just what they wished. And they answered Pilate—"Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!" Pilate was shocked and astonished. He replied—"What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" They answered—"Let Him be crucified!" But Pilate asked again—"Why? what evil hath He done?" Ah! there was no voice that could answer that. They had never seen Him do anything but good. And yet again those voices, which had joined in singing "Hosanna"

to Him a few days before, cried out—"Crucify Him ! crucify Him !"

The noise and confusion were so great that Pilate could do nothing. He knew it was an unjust and wicked thing they were asking him. Yet he was afraid to refuse. They might complain of him to the Roman Emperor. If he had been a just and good man he need not have feared this. It was his guilty conscience which made him afraid. He knew that many evil things might be said of him which were perfectly true. So he called for water and a basin, and washed his hands in the presence of the multitude. What was this for ? People say sometimes in this country, "I wash my hands of it," which means, "I will have nothing to do with it." But Pilate meant only, "It is not my fault—I wash my hands of the guilt of this cruel deed." But could he get rid of the guilt ? No, for he immediately went and did the wrong thing. He let Barabbas go free, and he gave the Lord Jesus into the hands of the soldiers to be crucified.

When a man was condemned to this fearful death, there was another cruel punishment that he had to suffer first. He was scourged. Scourging was so dreadful, that prisoners sometimes died of it. And this too the Lord Jesus suffered. But the cruel soldiers were not content when it was over. They threw one of their scarlet cloaks over his shoulders, to imitate the purple robe of a king, and put a reed in his hand for a sceptre. They wanted a crown for his head, and they made it of long sharp thorns. Then they said, "Hail ! King of the Jews," and mocked Him, and struck Him.

Pilate saw it done. He saw this guiltless Sufferer meek and silent and patient; there was not a cry, nor a frown, nor a murmur from Him. He bore it all just as the Prophet Isaiah had written of Him long ago—"I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting."—Isaiah l. 6. And Pilate determined to try once more to save Him. He went out and said to the people—"Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him."

Then Jesus was led forth, and stood on the terrace in the sight of all the multitude. How often before this had He looked upon a multitude! Do you remember what the sight of a great crowd had always made Him feel? He had compassion on them. How many He had pitied, and taught, and healed, and fed!

And now He stood before this crowd with that strange crown on His forehead, pale, exhausted with pain, bleeding from the wounds made by the sharp thorns and the cruel scourge. And Pilate said unto them—"Behold the man!" Yet in all that crowd there was not one that had compassion on Him. As David wrote in the Psalms—"I looked for some to take pity, but there was none."—Ps. lxxix. 20. In their rage the chief priests let out the true reason why they wanted to kill Him—"Because He made Himself the Son of God." They said that of Jesus, the Son of God, who had made Himself the Son of Man for our sakes.

Pilate was terrified when he heard this. He had never seen anyone like Jesus before; what if He should really be

more than a man? He went back to the judgment-hall, and asked Jesus privately, "Whence art thou?" But Jesus told him no more. Then once again he tried to set his prisoner free. But the cry rose louder than ever, "Crucify Him!" And the Jews added—"If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." Then Pilate gave way. He dared not run the risk of being called a traitor to the Emperor. He "delivered Jesus to their will." So the holy Son of God went forth to die the death of a slave for our sakes.





CHAPTER XLIII.

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

ST. MATT. xxvii. 32-56. ST. MARK xv. 21-41. ST. LUKE xxiii. 26-49.

ST. JOHN xix. 17-30.

HAVE told you before (chap. ii.) about the dreadful punishment of crucifixion. It was only slaves, or else the very lowest and vilest criminals, who were put to death in this way. And yet this was the way the blessed Son of God chose to suffer, that He might bear our guilt. "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Phil. ii. 8. It is about this death that I must tell you now. Remember, while you read of it, that it was all for our sakes—

"All for my sake—my peace to make."

It was the custom of the Romans to make a prisoner carry his own cross—or the two pieces of wood which the cross was made of—to the place where he was to suffer. Nobody else cared to carry a thing which was thought so shameful. Now imagine three prisoners, bearing their crosses, led along the streets of Jerusalem, guarded by soldiers, with a great crowd around them.

Who were the three? Two of them were thieves, or robbers; such men as would lie hid in lonely places, and spring out upon a traveller passing by. Perhaps they had robbed many travellers on that dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho.—See chap. xxxii. The other was the Lord Jesus.

You remember what a very different procession had passed along the streets five days before—a joyful multitude, waving their palm branches, and singing songs of praise. The disciples had thought then that their Master was going to set up His kingdom in all its glory. But they were mistaken. The kingdom they were looking for could not come unless Jesus suffered. He might have reigned in His heavenly glory, and left us sinners alone in our sin and our misery. But He wanted to save and to bless us; to have a glorious kingdom in which we might share. And so He came to suffer.

The shameful cross had been laid upon His shoulders, and He had carried it a few steps. But His strength was quite worn out by the dreadful night of suffering; He could walk no longer with that burden upon Him. No doubt the stern soldiers would urge Him forward, until they saw it was of no use. But they would not take the cross themselves. So they laid hold of a man who was passing by, and made him carry it. We hear afterwards of this man's sons believing in Jesus, and we may hope he did the same.

We are told of one thing only that the Lord Jesus said as He was led along those streets. There were some women of Jerusalem following. They were not like the rest of the crowd. They were sorry to see one who had done no wrong

thus cruelly treated, and they were sobbing and weeping. But He told them not to weep for Him. He wanted them to think of the punishment that would come by-and-by on that guilty city. It would be better for them to weep for their sins, to repent, and teach their children to do right, while there was yet time, than to shed useless tears.

They passed out of the city, and stopped at a place called Calvary, or Golgotha. Here the crosses were laid on the ground, that the soldiers might do their cruel work. But first they offered the victims a drink made of the sour wine, sometimes called vinegar, which they drank, mixed with myrrh. This was sometimes provided by kind-hearted people. It was an intoxicating drink, and made the people who drank it dull and heavy, so that they did not feel the pain so sharply. I dare say the two robbers drank it gladly. But the Lord Jesus would not take it. He would not have His mind made dull, and He would not make the pain less, for He had come to bear it all. While the cruel nails were piercing Him, He was praying for the soldiers who crucified Him—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The three crosses were raised upright, and fixed firmly in the ground. The cross of the Lord Jesus was placed in the middle, and the two robbers were on either side of Him. Then many of the crowd sat down to stare at Him.—St. Matt. xxvii. 36.

It was the custom that the crime which a man had committed should be written down, and the writing placed on the cross, over his head. "This is a robber" might have been

written over the heads of those two on either side ; perhaps even "This is a murderer." But what could be written about Jesus ? Pilate had found no fault in Him. So he wrote—"This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." The rulers did not like that, because it looked as if it were wrong for the Jews to have a king. But Pilate would not alter it.

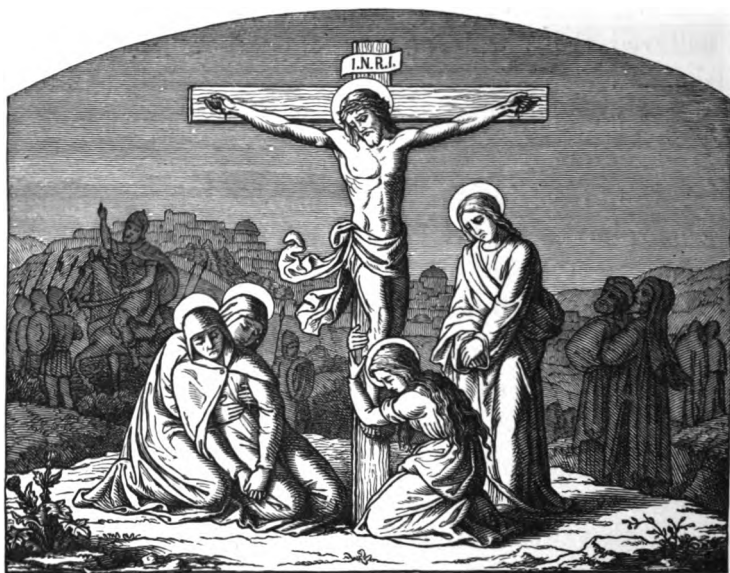
Then they began to mock the Lord Jesus with cruel and scornful words. The rulers set the wicked example, and the crowd that stood around followed them. Even those who passed by joined in the mockery. They said—"He saved others ; Himself He cannot save." "If He be the king of Israel, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." "He trusted in God ; let Him deliver Him now."

The soldiers had sat down to divide the clothes of the victims. There was one long robe which the Lord Jesus had worn, woven all through, without one seam. Perhaps it was the work of His mother Mary. They would not tear this, but cast lots who should have it. Then when they had finished they joined with the crowd in mocking "the King of the Jews ;" and one and another held up vinegar to His parched lips. They little thought they were doing the very things written long ago in the 22nd Psalm—"All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn : they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him. . . . They look and stare upon Me. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture." This psalm tells us more of what our Lord suffered on the cross than any other part of the Bible.

Even one of the robbers began to mock Him, and said—"If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." But the other rebuked his companion. "We have both deserved our punishment," he said; "but this man hath done nothing amiss." Then he turned his eyes on the One who hung on the cross beside him. He saw that that bruised and bleeding Sufferer was the Lord, and that He was able to save sinners. He believed that that One now so shamefully treated would come again in glory. And he cried to Him—"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And Jesus, in the midst of His suffering, heard the cry. He was still ready to receive sinners, and He said to that poor thief—"Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

Were there no others among all that were looking on who loved and believed in Jesus? There were many. We are told that "all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things."—St. Luke xxiii. 49. Perhaps they shrank from coming close to the mocking crowd. But they must have heard all that went on. And by-and-by a few of them made their way through the multitude, right up to the cross. I will tell you who they were. The mother of Jesus was there, with her sister, and Mary Magdalene, and John, the "disciple whom Jesus loved." And when He looked down, He saw these friends standing close to Him. Then He fixed His eyes first upon His mother, and then upon John, and said, tenderly and lovingly—"Woman, behold thy son!"

“Behold thy mother!” He wished the disciple whom He loved to take care of His mother, and be a son to her in her sorrow and need. And John took her to his own home. Then suddenly, at noonday, there came a thick cloud over the bright sun. Quickly it spread over the whole sky, and then for three hours there was black darkness. We are



not told how these hours passed. Most likely the mocking voices ceased, and a strange fear came over the crowd; and there would be silence everywhere as well as darkness.

Would this be a relief to the suffering Saviour? This was the time when He suffered most. I cannot tell you about it. ^W can none of us ever imagine how awful His sufferings

were. We know He had worse enemies than those cruel priests and rulers, worse than the rough soldiers, worse than the mocking crowd. The great enemy—Satan—who had tempted Him in the wilderness, would not leave Him alone now—the worst enemies were “the devil and his angels.” Then the awful burden—the sin of the whole world—which had caused Him that agony in the garden—it was now pressing on Him. He was in the sinner’s place, suffering what the sinner deserved. And you know He had always had His Father’s face shining on Him. He had said once—“The Father hath not left Me alone.” But now, after three hours of that awful darkness, He cried with a loud voice—“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Those words are the beginning of the 22nd Psalm—the same I mentioned before. As we read further, we come at last to the words, “Thou hast heard Me.” So we know that when the darkness rolled away, and the sun again shone forth in the sky, the terrible suffering of soul was over, and the Son of God felt again the light of His Father’s face and His Father’s smile.

All was nearly over now. Another word came from the holy Sufferer—the only time that He spoke of His bodily pain—“I thirst.” Then one of the soldiers filled a sponge with vinegar (or sour wine), put it on the end of a reed, and held it up for Him to drink. And this the Lord Jesus took.

The mocking jests had begun again, but they were soon silenced. Another loud cry, that all might hear, came from the cross. But this was no cry of anguish, but of triumph

and victory—"It is finished!" His work was done. And He was ready to die. Death could not come till He chose. But now, with the words, "Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit," He bowed His head, and gave up His life.

At that moment the earth rocked to and fro; the rocks around were split and torn, and the graves opened. The Roman centurion who commanded the soldiers, and had seen and listened to everything, exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And even the crowd who had stared and mocked now "smote their breasts and returned."

A stranger thing still happened in the Temple. There was a strong, thick curtain which divided the place where the priests went in to offer incense from another called the "Most Holy Place." Into the Most Holy Place no one ever entered except the high priest, and he might only go once a-year, with the blood of the sacrifice in his hand. For this place was meant as a picture of God's presence, into which no sinner is fit to come. This thick curtain, called "the vail," was torn right down from the top to the bottom.

Why was this? Because the Lord Jesus had borne the sinner's guilt and the sinner's punishment. He was the true Lamb, sacrificed for us. And He was the great High Priest, who went for us into the presence of God. And now that He had opened the way, it could never be shut again. Every sinner may come boldly, in the name of Jesus. There is nothing to keep him out. Those "who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Eph. ii. 13.



CHAPTER XLIV.

THE GRAVE IN THE GARDEN.

ST. MATT. xxvii. 57-66 ; xxviii. 1-15. ST. MARK xv. 42-47 ; xvi. 1-8.
ST. LUKE xxiii. 50-56 ; xxiv. 1-8. ST. JOHN xix. 31-42 ; xx. 1-10.



IN the morning, when that sad procession passed out of the gate of Jerusalem, some of the priests were in the Temple attending to the sacrifices. Suddenly a man rushed in holding out some money to them. What did he want ? It was the traitor Judas. He could not bear to think of what he had done ; he wanted to undo it if he could ; he was ready to give back the silver pieces. But the priests cared nothing for his distress. "What is that to us ?" they said, "see thou to that." His deed could not be undone. He threw down the money in the Temple, but never asked God to forgive him. In his despair he did another wicked thing ; he went and hanged himself. It is awful to think that all this began with the love of money.

This Friday—we call it "Good Friday" because of our Lord's love in dying for us—was the day before the Jewish Sabbath. I told you that they reckoned their Sabbath from sunset to sunset, so that it began on Friday evening. This

Sabbath in the Passover week was kept as a very "high day."

The Jews were anxious to have the bodies taken down from the crosses before the Sabbath began. It was six hours since the crosses had been set up. But in spite of the fearful pain, those who were crucified seldom died quickly. It was usually a long, slow, lingering death. So the rulers came to Pilate to beg that the legs of the sufferers might be broken, in order that they might die more quickly, and that the bodies should be taken away. Pilate gave leave. But when the soldiers came to the cross of the Lord Jesus, they saw that He was dead already. For long ago it had been written—"A bone of Him shall not be broken." One of the soldiers, however, to make sure, pierced His side with a spear. The apostle John, who stood by, saw this done, and saw blood and water flow out of the wound.

Then a man came to Pilate to ask a very different thing. His name was Joseph, and he was a "ruler," one of the great Council. He had not been with the rest when they condemned the Lord Jesus, for he believed in Him, though he was afraid to say so. Do you remember another ruler who believed also, and who had once tried to speak for the Lord Jesus? It was Nicodemus, who once came to Him by night. These men had been ashamed to follow Him while He lived; but now that He was gone, they longed to do something to show their love for Him. Joseph had the courage to go and ask that he might have His body. Pilate thought that Jesus could not be dead yet, and he sent to ask the centurion.

How was it that the Lord Jesus had died so much more quickly than others who were crucified? Because He suffered much more. His was not merely suffering of body. He suffered far more in His soul. "He poured out His soul unto death."—Isaiah liii. 12. We read in that wonderful 22nd Psalm the words—"Reproach hath broken My heart." And we believe it was so with the blessed Saviour. His heart was broken. The blood flowing from His side showed this. That precious blood was shed that we might be saved. As the hymn says—

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

Joseph got leave from Pilate, and then he went with Nicodemus and took the sacred body down from the cross. One had brought fine linen, and the other costly spices, and in these they wrapped it, ready for burial. There was a garden belonging to Joseph near at hand, and in it was a new tomb, cut out of the rock. No body had yet been laid there.

As the sun was setting, the body of the Lord Jesus was carried into this garden. It was a very short and a very quiet funeral. Mary Magdalene and a few other women followed, and watched as the body was laid in the tomb, and a great stone placed over the entrance. Then they hastened home to get ready some more spices and ointments before the Sabbath began, for they meant to come to the tomb the day after, and once more to anoint the dead body of Him they loved so well.

For they thought all was over now. They should see His face and hear His voice no more in this world. They must live the rest of their lives without Him. Even the apostles thought the same. They were not at the funeral. They had gone home, perhaps to the houses of friends. No doubt they were afraid to linger about. And they had quite forgotten



that He had spoken to them before of His rising again. They felt utterly desolate. There was nothing left for them in this world. And without Him heaven seemed very far away. That Sabbath was no day of rest or joy for them. It was the very saddest day they had ever known. I do not know whether they ventured to go to the Temple as usual, or

whether they kept quiet in the "upper room." It could make little difference where they went or stayed, for there was no gleam of comfort for them anywhere.

You might suppose that the enemies of the Lord Jesus were well satisfied, now that they had got their way. But they were not quite easy. They had never forgotten that saying of His—"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They had tried to turn it against Him, and yet they had understood it better than they chose to confess. And they were afraid of what might happen on the third day.—See also Matt. xii. 40. So they went to Pilate and asked that they might have a guard of soldiers to watch the tomb, "lest," they said, "His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead." The soldiers were sent, and they sealed up the opening of the grave. If the stone were moved the seal would be broken. No one would dare to break the governor's seal, or to pass the soldiers.

The Roman soldiers could be trusted to keep watch. It was death for one of them to sleep at his post. So all night long they paced up and down the quiet garden, or sat under the trees talking together.

But when midnight was past, and the morning of the third day was near at hand, they suddenly felt the ground tremble beneath them. The earth rocked to and fro, and as they looked round in terror, they saw a glorious figure in front of the tomb. His face shone like lightning, and his robe was white as snow. It was an angel from heaven

come to roll away the stone from the grave. The soldiers shook with fear, and could not stir from the place. At last, when the angel had disappeared from sight, they fled away from the open grave into the city.

A little later—the sun was beginning to rise, but here it was still dark—the women came into the garden carrying their spices and ointments. They began to wonder how they should get the heavy stone moved away, so that they might go into the grave and anoint their Master's body. As they came a little nearer, they saw it had already been rolled away; the grave was open. What could it mean? Had His enemies been there and stolen away His dead body? Mary Magdalene hurried away at once to call Peter and John. The others went on right into the grave.

We do not generally think a grave a pleasant place. People often pass by graves carelessly and thoughtlessly, but then they are closed up, and there is nothing but the green grass or the stone to be seen. Inside are the coffins, perhaps mouldering away; and the dead bodies within them turning to dust. All this seems sad and dreadful. But these women so loved their Master, that they could not be satisfied without going into the grave (not like ours, but a large hole in the rock) to find His body. When they entered, they started back in sudden fear. Yet it was nothing dreadful which they saw. There was no dead body, but two glorious angels in white shining robes sitting there—angels in a grave! But ah! it is far more wonderful to think that the Son of God — laid in a grave. These glorious angels bade the women

“Fear not.” Then they told them the wonderful news—
“He is not here : for He is risen, as He said.”

Then it was all true. He was Messiah ; He was the Son of God ! He had conquered death ! Oh, how suddenly their sorrow had been “turned into joy!”—St. John xvi. 20. They hastened away from the tomb, their hearts still beating with



a strange awe at the wonderful sight they had seen and the words that they heard. They spoke to no one in the streets. They waited till they should find the disciples and repeat to them the wonderful story.

When they were gone, Peter and John arrived at the tomb. They went in also, and noticed the linen in which the

sacred body had been wrapped neatly folded together. They did not see the angels, nor hear any voice. But the empty tomb was enough for John ; “ he saw and believed.”

The soldiers, meanwhile, had gone to the chief priests and told them what they had seen. Would the chief priests at last believe in Jesus ? No ; this wonder could not make them believe, for they were not willing in their hearts. But they did not want the story repeated. And they knew the news that the grave was empty might soon spread abroad. So they told the soldiers to say to the people, “ His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept.” They paid them a large sum of money to tell this lie, and they promised to make all right with the governor in case he should hear it.

I want you to remember the words of the angels—“ He is not here : He is risen.” It is pleasant to read and hear about the life the Lord Jesus lived on the earth. And it is wonderful to think of all He suffered for us ; of His agony, His death, and His burial. But His sufferings are over now. His earthly life and His death are over now. He is risen. He is living. He sees us now, and knows us, and cares for us, and is near to every one of us. And He wants us to be His disciples, and live with Him. He has given us the story of His earthly life and death in the Bible, that we may know Him, and love Him, and trust Him now. And those who trust in Him need never fear death or the grave, for nothing can ever separate them from the Lord Jesus.—Rom. viii. 38, 39.



CHAPTER XLV.

THE DAY OF MEETING.

ST. MATT. xxviii. 9, 10. ST. MARK xvi. 9-13. ST. LUKE xxiv. 10-43.
ST. JOHN xx. 11-29.



WHEN Peter and John turned away from the empty grave, Mary Magdalene remained in the garden alone. She could not bear to leave the place where she had last seen the sacred body of her Lord. She stood by the grave weeping. She had not been inside it like the rest, but she knew from Peter and John that it was empty. By-and-by she stooped down and looked in. In the place where the body had lain she saw two angels sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet. She was not frightened like the other women ; she was too full of sorrow to be afraid. The angels asked her, "Why weepest thou?" and she answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." Then she turned round, and saw, through her tears, a man standing close by. She thought it must be the gardener, and she begged him to tell her if he had taken away the body, and where she could find it. He only answered one word—"Mary !" Her eyes

were dim with tears, but she knew the voice. It was the Lord Himself. She answered at once, "Rabboni"—"Dear Master."

Before the Lord Jesus left His disciples He had made them this promise—"I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Mary Magdalene was the first to whom this promise came true. In her great joy she seems to have thought that He had come back to be with His disciples just as He had been before. But she made a mistake. He was going to be with them in a far more wonderful manner than He used to be, only this could not be until He had gone back to His Father in heaven. You shall hear more about it in another chapter. He had come to see them for a short time before he went up to heaven, and then He would never leave them again. He sent Mary with this message to His disciples—"Go, tell My brethren, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, unto My God and your God."

The disciples of the Lord Jesus clung to one another in their sorrow. The apostles and several others had assembled together in the "upper room" where they had spent the last evening with their Master. I suppose it was there that Mary found them, mourning and weeping. The other women, who came in perhaps with her, had also their wonderful story to tell. For the Lord Jesus had shown Himself to them also. They brought a special message to Peter. The tender Saviour knew how great was Peter's sorrow, and thought of him. You would think the disciples must be overjoyed at the news

and the loving message. But no; they would not believe what the women said. "Their words seemed to them as idle tales." Such a thing seemed too good to be true. It was like a beautiful dream. And I dare say their tears only burst out afresh, and the aching in their hearts grew sharper. But was it not strange that they should have forgotten His own promise?

By-and-by two of the company bade farewell to the rest, and went out of the city to a place eight miles off, called Emmaus. Perhaps their home may have been there. It must have been a beautiful walk, especially in the bright spring weather, with all the fresh green and the flowers springing up around them. But their hearts were too full of sadness to care for anything of this kind. There was but one thing they could speak of—the loss of their dear Master. How they would talk over His sufferings, His cruel death, His burial in the garden! It seemed to them that all their hopes were buried too. They had believed in Him. They loved Him. But all that they had looked for was at an end. How could He be Messiah, they thought, since He was now dead?

As they talked, a stranger came near. He was going the same way. He saw their sad faces, and asked what was the matter, and what they had been talking about. They were quite astonished that he seemed to know nothing of the wonderful life and cruel death of Jesus of Nazareth, and they told him all about it. Then they told him what they had hoped—"We trusted that it had been He which should have

redeemed Israel"—and of their bitter disappointment. There was another thing, too, on their minds. "Beside all this," they said, "to-day is the third day since these things were done;" and then they related the story of the women.

The stranger listened to it all. But when they had finished, He never said He was sorry for their trouble, though He looked so kind and sympathising. He seemed astonished, and called them "slow of heart to believe." Then He began to remind them of all that Moses and the prophets had written about the Messiah who was to come. They knew many of these things, but there was a great deal which they had never understood. The stranger explained everything. He showed them how all the sacrifices pointed out that Messiah must suffer and die before He entered into His glory; how Isaiah had written that He should be "cut off out of the land of the living," and His soul made "an offering for sin" (Isaiah liii. 8-10); how Daniel had said that Messiah should be "cut off, but not for Himself" (Dan. ix. 26); and how it had been foretold that after all this He should be "exalted, and extolled, and be very high."—Isaiah lii. 13.

They had never heard words like these before, and I dare say they felt as if they could have listened all night long. When they reached Emmaus, they could not bear to part with this stranger. He appeared to be going on farther, but they begged him very hard to stay with them. "Abide with us," they said, "for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." So the stranger went in, and sat down with them to the evening meal.

Presently he took some bread, broke it, and handed it to them. In a moment their eyes were opened—they knew Him! It was their own Lord and Master. It was Christ who had suffered, and who was soon to enter into His glory. But in that moment He had disappeared. “Did not our heart burn within us,” they said to one another, “while He



talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?” It was nearly time for rest, but they could not stay at Emmaus. They rose up from the table, and started at once on their way back to Jerusalem. It was late when they got there, but they found the rest of the company still gathered together in the “upper room.” There was no longer

mourning and weeping amongst them. The sadness was gone from every face, and there was wonder and joy in every eye. And this was their greeting to the two who had just returned—"The Lord is risen indeed!" What had made them believe it?

A little while before, Peter had joined them again. He must have been the most unhappy of all, because he had denied his Lord. Perhaps he had gone out to weep alone. We do not know where it was, or when it was; but the Lord Jesus came to him—came to the disciple who had denied Him—came to him the first of all the apostles, even before John, the beloved disciple. Think what tender love this was!

And can you not fancy how Peter went back to the upper room—no longer with drooping head, like a man weighed down with a heavy load—but with shining face and tears of joy in his eyes, and such a look, and such words, that they could not help believing what he told them? And so they knew the Lord was risen, because Peter had seen Him.

Then the two from Emmaus told their glad story. And while they were all talking together, "Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them." The doors were fast shut. No one had opened them. How did Jesus come in? His risen body was no longer like our mortal bodies. He could come and go where He willed and as He willed.

His first words to them were—"Peace be unto you." But even after all they had heard, they could hardly believe that it was really He. They thought it must be a spirit, and they were so terrified. Then He came near, and showed them

His hands and His feet. There were the marks of the nails which had pierced Him! Though His risen body could never more suffer pain or hurt, He keeps those marks still. And when the disciples looked at these, they knew indeed it was Jesus who was crucified, and they were "glad when they saw the Lord."

In His love and tenderness He gave them another proof that He was not merely a spirit, but that His body was risen from the grave. He asked for some food. They gave Him a piece of broiled fish and part of a honeycomb. I suppose this was the remains of their evening meal. The Lord Jesus took and ate. He did not need this, but He did it for their sakes.

Then, that they might be sure He had forgiven their having forsaken Him in the hour of danger, and their unbelief, He said again—"Peace be unto you." And He told them they were to be His messengers, and teach others about Him.

There were only ten of the apostles there that evening. The other one, Thomas, was away. I suppose He had gone home in the sadness of his heart, even before Peter came back. And so he missed the Lord's visit. Afterwards the others told him about it, but he would not believe them. He said, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." No doubt he spent a very miserable week, while he might have been rejoicing like the rest. But he took care not to be away when the First Day

came round again. And that day the Lord Jesus came again. He said to Thomas—"Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." But Thomas had no need to do this. The sight of Jesus was enough for him, and he exclaimed—"My Lord and my God."

That First Day—the day our Lord rose from the dead—the third after He was crucified—has never been forgotten. Those who believed in Jesus always met on that day to worship Him, and they have done so ever since. It is called "The Lord's Day," and it is our Sabbath.





CHAPTER XLVI.

THE RISEN LORD IN GALILEE.

ST. MATT. xxviii. 16-20. ST. JOHN xxi.

ITOLD you that the Lord Jesus was not going to live with His disciples any more as He had done before His death. He had not come back to life just like Lazarus and the others whom He had raised from the dead. They would have to die once more. But "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more."—Rom. vi. 9. His earthly life was over. The body with which He rose from the grave was the very same which had suffered. But now it had become "a spiritual body."—1 Cor. xv. 44. It could suffer no more; it could grow old no more; it could "hunger no more, neither thirst any more." It was perfect and glorious. And when His people rise again at His coming, they will have bodies like that.

He had finished the work He came to do on the earth, and He was going home to the Father—back to His heavenly glory. But He had many things to say to His disciples before He went up. And He had to show them more fully who He was. They believed that He was Christ the Son of

God. But they hardly knew yet (except Thomas) that He was God—one with the Father. We cannot understand how this is. We know that God the Father loves us ; that God the Son died for us ; that God the Holy Spirit puts every right thought into our heart, and teaches us to love our Saviour. And we know that these three blessed Persons are One—"Three in One, and One in Three." We know this because it is told us in the Bible. The disciples did not yet know it all. They knew Jesus as man ; they had to learn to know Him as God—the *God-Man* who redeemed us. So He did not remain with them as He used to do, but showed Himself to them from time to time. And they did not see all His glory till He left them and went up to heaven.

He had told them to go back to Galilee, for He would meet them there. So once more we find them on the shores of the lake. It must have been very delightful, after all that they had passed through in Jerusalem, to come back to their old home, and to the place where Jesus had first called them to follow Him. How everything around must have reminded them of Him ! They did not know when or where He would come to them. I dare say they spent the time with their friends who loved Him, telling them of all that had happened ; or roaming among the hills where they spent so many days with Him. The fishermen would most likely be at their old home at Bethsaida.

One day Peter proposed to go fishing, and his companions said they would go too. I must tell you who these were. There were James and John, who had been "partners" with

Peter in the old days. You know it was these three who had been most with the Lord Jesus. Then there was Thomas, so happy now that all his doubts were past, and he knew that Jesus was indeed his Lord and his God; and Nathanael, the first who had confessed Jesus to be the "Son of God" (chap. viii.); and two other disciples whose names are not told us; seven altogether. They set out, as usual, in the evening, and were out on the lake all night. But they caught nothing. And when day was beginning to break, they turned, weary and hungry, towards the shore.

As they drew near, they saw in the dim light the figure of a man standing on the beach. He called out to them, and asked if they had caught any fish. They answered, "No." Then he told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. I suppose they thought that, from the place where he was standing, he could see a dark shadow in the water, and that there was likely to be fish there; for they cast in their net at once. Immediately they felt a tug at the net, and presently it became so heavy that they could not draw it into the boat again. John understood at once, and he said to Peter, "It is the Lord." Peter was in such a hurry to get to Him that he at once jumped into the water, and swam to the shore. The others followed in the boat, dragging the net after them.

There was a fire burning on the shore, and fish was cooking and bread baking on it. Who had done this? The Lord Himself had watched His disciples on the lake, and had got their morning meal all ready for them. You see

nothing is too small for Him to care about. When the boat came to land, Peter remembered that he had left the others to do the work of bringing it in, and he now went and drew in the net upon the shore. It was full of great fishes—a hundred and fifty-three of them. It may have been that the disciples were in want of money just now for their daily needs, and the price of all this fish would supply them for some time to come.

But the Lord Jesus had done more than supply their needs. He had taught them a great lesson for the future. Do you remember how He had promised to make them “fishers of men”?—Chap. xiii. This wonderful “draught of fishes” would remind them of the promise. And if by-and-by they found their work seem hard and discouraging—if ever they should seem to be toiling and taking nothing—they would remember how their Lord had watched them on the lake. They would remember that after the long, weary night, He had given them a great deal more than they ever expected. And they would learn to trust Him, and work on patiently till His time came. I remember reading a book called *The Night of Toil*. It is about some missionaries who laboured for eleven years in one of the South Sea Islands without seeing one heathen give up his idols and believe in Jesus. But when that long “night” was over, numbers and numbers turned to the Lord, till at length there was not a heathen left on the island.

But I must tell you more of what happened that morning. The Lord invited His disciples to sit down to their breakfast,

and helped them Himself. I think they must have seen in Him something more wonderful than they had seen before; He must have shown them a little of the glory of His risen body. For though they would have liked to hear from His own lips that He was their Lord and Master, they dared not ask Him. Wonder, and gladness, and awe kept them silent.

After the meal He spoke to Peter. He asked him—"Lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter had once said that if all the rest forsook their Master, he would not do so. But now he could not boast any more. He remembered his sad fall, and only answered humbly—"Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee." But twice more the Lord asked him, "Lovest thou Me?" Three times he had denied his Lord, so three times the question was put to him. And the third time he answered, with a sorrowful, yet eager face, and, I dare say, with tears in his eyes—"Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love Thee." And the Lord Jesus showed His servant that He trusted him, for He gave him work to do. He said it three times—"Feed My lambs." "Feed (that is, take care of) My sheep." "Feed My sheep."

There was more that He said to Peter, but I cannot tell it you now. You will find it in the last chapter of St. John's Gospel. I must tell you now of a great meeting in Galilee.

There were many of the disciples of Jesus who had not yet seen their risen Lord. He had appeared to the apostles, the women who followed Him, and a few others. Now He was going once more to let them all see Him. He appointed a

mountain as the place where they should meet. And no doubt the apostles carried round the message to those who believed in Him.

We are not told which mountain was chosen. It would most likely be some quiet place, away from the public roads. Think of the crowd that gathered together. It was not nearly as large as the crowds that had so often followed Jesus. He had healed multitudes; He had fed five thousand. Yet there were not many more than five hundred to meet Him after His resurrection—not many more than five hundred who were true disciples. How was this? The Holy Spirit was not yet come from on high. He had taught a few hearts to love the Lord Jesus, but He had not yet come in all His power. The Church—that is, the company of believers—had a very small beginning.

There were all kinds of people in this company of five hundred. Side by side with the fishermen of Galilee might be the two rulers from Jerusalem, Joseph and Nicodemus, and perhaps others besides.—St. John xii. 42. Zacchæus the publican would be there, and many whose lives had once been as bad as his. Bartimæus and the once blind beggar of Jerusalem (chap. xxviii.) would be there, eager to see again the face of Him who had opened their eyes. But the greater number would be those who had learned to love and trust Him in Galilee, rich and poor, old and young, men and women. And together with the Jewish disciples there were most likely a few Gentiles, for some of these had heard the Lord Jesus and believed in Him.

We are not told in what manner the Lord appeared to them. I do not think He came walking up the mountain-side with the Twelve as He used to do. I think He showed to His Church something of His glory. Most likely He appeared suddenly in the midst of them, as He had done before in the "upper room." And I think His face must have been like the description we have in the Book of Revelation—"as the sun shineth in his strength."—Rev. i. 16. And when they saw Him, that whole assembly fell down before Him and worshipped Him. A few among them were perplexed, and could hardly believe it was really the same Jesus whom they had known, but I think their doubts must have passed away when they heard His voice.

This is what He said—"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." They had seen a little of His power even when He lived among them as a man; but now they knew that the Father had given all things into His hand, and that He was "God over all"—"King of kings, and Lord of lords." How blessed to know that everything was in the hands of the Saviour whom they had learned to love and trust! He went on—"Go ye therefore, and teach (that is, make disciples of) all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

That was the work He left for His Church to do. They were to be His messengers, to spread His name abroad, so that all the world might hear, and thousands in all places

might turn to Him. Think what an honour! Then He finished with this promise—"And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Going away, and yet to be always with them! They never need feel lonely, or anxious, or frightened, or discouraged, as long as they remembered those words—"All power"—"With you alway."

Do not forget that these disciples were to teach others "to observe all things" that Jesus had told them. What He said to them is meant for us too. His words were for the whole Church. And the work He gave them to do is not yet finished. His people must go on doing it until He comes again.





CHAPTER XLVII.

GOING UP TO HEAVEN.

ST. MARK xvi. 19. ST. LUKE xxiv. 50-53. ACTS i. 1-12.



HE time was now come when the Lord Jesus was going back to heaven. It was forty days since that first glad meeting with His disciples on the day He rose from the dead. We are not told how often they had seen Him during this time. The last apostle who saw Him alone was James.

Was it a sad thing for the disciples that their Lord was going back to heaven? No; for they were not going to lose Him. I told you in the last chapter of His promise—"Lo, I am with you alway." But how could this be?

When He sent them out to preach in Galilee, they had to leave Him. When they were on the lake in the storm, and He on the mountain-top, they felt all alone and forsaken. Yet He was really with them all the while, for He is God, and is everywhere. But they could not understand this or get the comfort of it. But now that He was going up to heaven He would send the Holy Spirit to them. That gracious Spirit was coming to dwell in their hearts; and He

would make them know and feel that Jesus was present with them. And they would know this in a manner they had never known before. They would really be closer to Jesus than they had ever been before.

Besides this, the Lord Jesus was going to heaven for them. He was going to enter heaven as a man, with His glorified human body, to open the gates for His people, and to get ready a place for them there. He told His disciples before His death—"I go to prepare a place for you."—St. John xiv. 2. And not that only. He was going to be their Friend and Brother in heaven, to speak for them there, to care for them, to send down blessings upon them. It would take me a very long while to tell you even a little of all He went to do for them. You must find it out some day in the Bible. And when you get to know a little of it, you will understand why He said to them before His death—"It is expedient [the very best thing] for you that I go away."—St John xvi. 7.

The apostles had come back to Jerusalem, and with them Mary the mother of Jesus, the rest of His relations, and the women from Galilee; and perhaps others besides. There the Lord Jesus met them again, and told them to wait at Jerusalem until the Holy Ghost should come. They must not begin the work He had given them to do until they had got the "power from on high." Then, when they had got it they were to be His witnesses, not only in Jerusalem, but "unto the uttermost part of the earth." A witness means a person who can say "I saw it myself," or "I heard it myself." The apostles and disciples were His first witnesses.

They could say, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, . . . declare we unto you."—1 St. John i. 1, 3. But if the Holy Spirit has taught us to know the Lord Jesus in our hearts, we can be His witnesses too.

There was one question the apostles wanted to ask Him. You remember how they had expected Him to be "King of the Jews," and to set the Jewish nation free. They still thought of this, and they asked—"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" He did not tell them. They were to think of the work He had given them to do, and to wait till His time came. The kingdom has not yet been restored, but we are still looking for that blessed day to come.

I suppose it was in the "upper room" that He had met His disciples. He led them out of the city, as He had done that Thursday evening five weeks before; down the steep hill, across the valley of the Kedron, over the Mount of Olives to the further side, as far as Bethany. They did not go into the village, but stopped at some quiet spot a little distance off.

There the Lord Jesus lifted up His hands to bless His disciples. Every eye was fixed upon that glorious Face. And as He blessed them, they saw Him rise from the earth, upwards towards the sky. He was going to His Father. They watched Him as He rose higher and higher, until at last "a cloud received Him out of their sight." I have often thought about that cloud, and I fancy—though I cannot be

sure—that it was really a multitude of white-robed angels. We read in the Psalms the words—“Who maketh the clouds His chariot” (Ps. civ. 3); and again—“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.”—Psalm lxxviii. 17.

And think of the crowds of glorious beings who would be



watching for His coming, and hasting to meet Him! The angels had sung praises at His birth into this world—what must their songs have been when He ascended again to heaven! We catch an echo of their notes of praise in one of the Psalms—“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye

lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory" (Ps. xxiv. 7-10) ; and again—"God is gone up with a shout, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet."—Ps. xlvii. 5.

But were the disciples forgotten, as they stood gazing up where He had disappeared from their sight ? No ; they found two of the bright angels standing by them, come down with a message about their Lord. The angels said to them—"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

Is it not pleasant to think that they called that glorious King, who was taking His seat at the Father's right hand, with the praises of heaven ringing round Him, by the precious name *Jesus* ? For that name reminds us that He is still a Man—our Brother in heaven ; that in the midst of His glory He is still our Saviour. And one day "this same Jesus" will come again, to take all who love Him to the glorious home He has prepared for them.

Before they left that sacred spot on Olivet, the disciples knelt down and worshipped Him. They could no longer see Him, but they knew they were not separated from Him, and they knew that nothing should ever separate them. Then they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy," and, till the

time came for them to begin their work, "they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

Why had they this great joy ?

Because the Lord Jesus had gone back to heaven. Because His sufferings were over, and His work done, and He had sat down with His Father on His throne.—Rev. iii. 21. Because He was the great King, who had all power, and all His enemies should be overcome. Because He was going to be always with them. Because He was coming again to fetch all His people home. Because He lives for ever.

I have told you just a little about His life on earth. But remember He not only lived once for you, and died once for you ; He is living now, and wants you to know Him now.

Did anyone ever see Him after He had gone up to heaven ?

Stephen the martyr saw Him. Just as he was going to be put to a cruel death, he looked up and saw "the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56)—standing to help His servant and receive his spirit.

Saul the persecutor saw Him, and heard Him say, "I am Jesus of Nazareth." And the persecutor became Paul the Apostle.—Acts xxii. 8 ; 1 Cor. xv. 8.

And long after, John, the beloved disciple, saw Him. And to him He said—"I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."—Rev. i. 13, 18.

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